Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Registry of Motor Vehicles

Motorcycle Manual

January 2009

Original photo provided by Ken Condon.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE

RMV

Registry of Motor Vehicles

INTRODUCTION

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Motorcycle Manual is a supplement to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Driver's Manual. Motorcycle riders are urged to read and understand both manuals in an effort to help keep Massachusetts roads safe.

The Massachusetts RMV is confident that improved licensing, quality motorcycle rider education, increased public awareness, and observance of motor vehicle laws, rules, and regulations can help to reduce the potential for motorcycle related injuries in the Commonwealth.

The Massachusetts Motorcycle Manual has been prepared in cooperation with the Motorcycle Safety Foundation. This supplement details for motorcycle riders at all levels how to safely ride a motorcycle.

This manual is published by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles for the benefit of residents and visitors alike. While it contains a great deal of information about RMV policies and state laws, it is important to note that this is not a legal document. Every effort is made to present the most accurate, error free, and up-to-date information. However, RMV policies and fees are subject to change from time to time, as are laws governing motor vehicles and their drivers.

MISSION STATEMENT

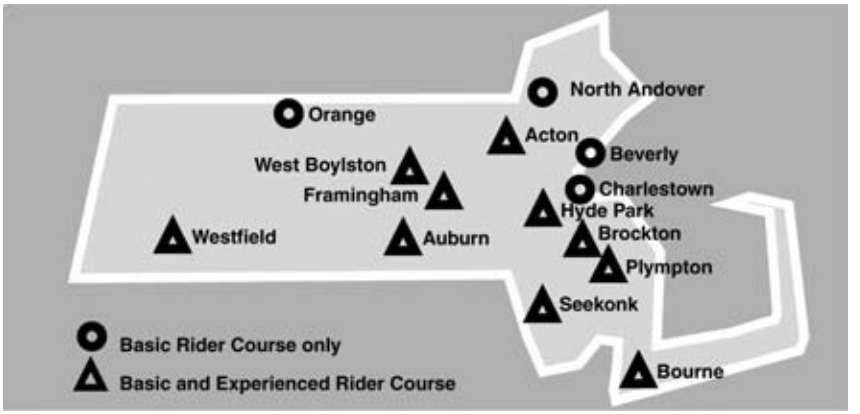
The Massachusetts RMV will develop and support policies and procedures that enhance the safety of our customers by licensing only qualified individuals, registering and titling vehicles appropriately, and inspecting vehicles and buses to keep drivers and passengers safe.

MASSACHUSETTS RIDER EDUCATION PROGRAM

Sponsored by the Massachusetts RMV, the Massachusetts Rider Education Program ("MREP") provides quality rider education and training to both novice and experienced motorcycle riders. The MREP is designed to assist riders of all levels and to promote the safe operation of motorcycles. Riders of all abilities are encouraged to attend and benefit from the professional instruction and on-cycle training offered through the MREP.

In the basic rider course, students will learn motorcycling skills through classroom instruction and on-cycle training. In the experienced rider course, students will learn advanced riding techniques and defensive riding strategies. This curriculum has been developed by the Motorcycle Safety Foundation ("MSF") and is based on years of research.

The basic rider course is approximately fifteen (15) hours, with five (5) hours of classroom instruction and ten (10) hours of on-cycle instruction. The classroom instruction will cover motorcycling basics such as control, preparation, turning and braking, street awareness, special riding situations, and the dangers of riding impaired. The on-cycle instruction will incorporate and apply the lessons learned in the classroom instruction. Students must attend all classroom and on-cycle sessions and pass both a multiple-choice examination and riding skills evaluation to graduate the program.



The experienced rider course is approximately seven (7) hours, integrating on-cycle range instruction with discussion topics covering motorcycle preparation, advanced street riding strategies, traction management, and advanced braking and cornering techniques. Students must attend all sessions and pass both a multiple-choice examination and a riding skills evaluation to graduate from the program.

The MREP is currently being offered at fourteen (14) separate locations throughout the Commonwealth. Please direct all questions regarding the administration of the MREP to the Registry of Motor Vehicles, P.O. Box 55889, Boston, MA 02205-5889 or call 413-781-0633. Site availability is subject to change without notice. If you would like a brochure, call RMV/MREP Boston at 617-351-9585.

Qualified graduates of either the Basic Rider Course[SM] or the Experienced Rider Course[SM] are exempt from the MA RMV's motorcycle road test and may be entitled to a limited ten percent discount on their Massachusetts-based motorcycle insurances.

The Massachusetts Rider Education Program, Classroom Availability, Fees, and General Information may be found at www.mass.gov/rmv.

DEFINITIONS

MOTORCYCLE

Any motor vehicle having a seat or saddle for the rider that is designed to travel with no more than three wheels contacting the ground, including any bicycle with a motor or driving wheels attached.

MOTORIZED BICYCLE

A pedal bicycle which has a helper motor, or a non-pedal bicycle which has a motor, with a cylinder capacity not exceeding fifty (50) cubic centimeters, an automatic transmission, and which is capable of a maximum speed of no more than thirty (30) miles per hour (mph).

OPERATION OF MOTORIZED BICYCLES

Under Massachusetts law, mopeds fall into the category of “motorized bicycles”(with or without pedals) and are therefore regulated by the Registrar of Motor Vehicles. Individuals must have a valid learner’s permit or driver’s license to operate a motorized bicycle or moped.

Mopeds must have automatic transmissions and cylinder capacities of no more than 50 cubic centimeters. In addition, mopeds must meet all federal motor vehicle safety standards and have maximum speeds of no more than 30 mph. The following limitations apply:

- Individuals may not operate at speeds greater than 25 mph.
- Individuals may not operate on state highways or limited-access roads with signs prohibiting bicycles.
- Individuals may not operate on off-street recreational paths.
- Individuals may use bicycle lanes along roadways.
- Individuals must use the proper hand signals before stopping or turning.
- Individuals and their passengers must wear United States Department of Transportation (US DOT) approved helmets when operating.
- Individuals may not carry passengers while operating on a permit.

MOTORIZED SCOOTER

Any two-wheeled tandem or three-wheeled device, that has handlebars, is designed to be stood or sat upon by the operator, and is powered by an electric or gas powered motor that is capable of propelling the device with or without human propulsion. The definition of a "motorized scooter" shall not include a motorcycle, motorized bicycle, or three-wheeled motorized wheelchair.

OPERATION OF MOTORIZED SCOOTERS

Under Massachusetts law, motorized scooters fall into the category of "motor vehicles" and are therefore regulated by the Registrar of Motor Vehicles. Individuals must have a valid learner's permit or driver's license to operate a motorized scooter. Any individual who operates a motorized scooter is subject to the motor vehicle laws of Massachusetts. However, the Registrar of Motor Vehicles does not require that motorized scooters be registered.

The Registrar of Motor Vehicles has further determined that "mini-motorcycles" and "pocket bikes" are motorized scooters. All motorized scooters must be equipped with operational "stop" and "turn" signals and must meet all federal motor vehicle safety standards. The following limitations apply:

- Individuals may not operate at speeds greater than 20 mph.
- Individuals may not operate on state highways or limited access roadways with signs prohibiting bicycles or scooters.
- Individuals may not operate upon any way after sunset or before sunrise.
- Individuals may operate motorized scooters on public ways.
- Individuals must keep to the right side of the roadway at all times, including when passing a motor vehicle which is moving in the travel lane of the way.
- Individuals must use the proper electronic and hand signals before stopping or turning.
- Individuals must wear United States Department of Transportation (US DOT) approved helmets when operating.
- Individuals may not carry passengers while operating a motorized scooter.

LICENSING REQUIREMENTS

PERMITS

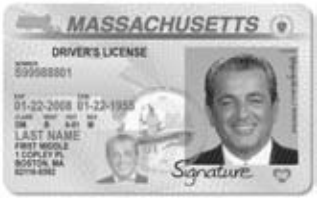
Any individual who is seeking a Massachusetts Motorcycle License ("Class M") must obtain a learner's permit prior to applying for such a license. To obtain a learner's permit, an individual must be at least sixteen (16) years of age, complete an application, present valid identification, pay a fee, and pass a knowledge test.

Note: If an applicant does not have a Class D license, he/she must pass both a Class D knowledge test and a Class M knowledge test.

Permit holders are only authorized to operate during daylight hours (sunrise to sunset). Permit holders are prohibited from carrying passengers while operating a motorcycle. An individual cannot convert the learner's permit to a valid Massachusetts Motorcycle License until having successfully completed the requisite road test or the Massachusetts Rider Education Program. Any permit holder failing the motorcycle road test twice must successfully complete an approved rider training program before scheduling another motorcycle road test or MREP. Prior to the issuance of a Massachusetts Motorcycle License, an individual must pay all associated licensing fees.

LICENSES

Any individual meeting the above referenced permit requirements who is at least sixteen and one-half (16 ½) years of age and who has not had a driver's license or the right to operate revoked may apply to begin the process of obtaining a Class M license at any full-service RMV Branch.



LICENSING REQUIREMENTS FOR MINORS

Massachusetts requires all individuals under age eighteen (18) to possess a restricted operator's license. This restricted operator's license is issued to minors between sixteen and one-half (16 ½) and eighteen (18) years of age and is called a Junior Operator's License (JOL). Minors seeking or holding a JOL must additionally comply with the following requirements:

- Possess a learner's permit for a period of at least six (6) months prior to taking the road test
- Maintain a clean driving record for a period of at least six (6) consecutive months prior to taking the road test
- If under age 18, may not operate a motor vehicle between the hours of 12:30 a.m. and 5:00 a.m.
- Complete a driver's education course

LICENSE FEES
EFFECTIVE AUGUST 1, 2009

Class A (5 Year License)	$75.00
Class B (5 Year License)	$75.00
Class C (5 Year License)	$75.00
Class D (5 Year License)	$50.00
Class M (5 Year License) [Motorcycle Only]	$50.00
Motorcycle Endorsement (on existing license)	$15.00
License Application and Road Test (for all classes)	$20.00
Class A Permit Application (2 year Permit with Combination Vehicle Endorsement)	$40.00
Permit Application (2 Year Permit Classes B, C, D, M)	$30.00
CDL Endorsement (with CDL Permit Application)	$10.00
CDL Endorsement (after CDL Permit Issued)	$30.00
(Each additional CDL Endorsement during same transaction)	$10.00
Amend License (Add/Delete Restrictions)	$15.00
Duplicate License	$20.00
Duplicate Permit	$15.00
Duplicate HazMat Certificate	$10.00
Mass Identification Card (5 Year ID)	$25.00
Liquor Identification Card (5 Year ID)	$25.00
Amend Identification Card	$25.00
Duplicate Identification Card	$25.00
Out of State License Conversion	
Class A	$125.00
Class B	$125.00
Class C	$125.00
Class D	$100.00
Class M	$100.00
Motorcycle Endorsement (on existing license)	$15.00

Currently, you can opt to pay the knowledge test, road test, and licensing fee when you take the written test. MREP participants are urged to pre-pay all associated fees. If you choose not to pay all associated fees at that time, you can pay the remaining fees when you book your road test. If you are a new Massachusetts resident and have an out-of-state driver's license, you may be eligible to convert your license without testing.

All fees are subject to change at any time

ROAD TEST

EQUIPMENT

The motorcycle you use for your Class M road test should be safe and in good working order. Your road test will be canceled if the examiner believes your motorcycle is unsafe. Additionally, you must show the examiner your motorcycle's registration document and a valid inspection sticker.

Motorcycles registered in Massachusetts must undergo an annual safety inspection and receive a passing inspection certificate.

If your motorcycle is registered out of state, you will have to show the examiner proof of insurance coverage equal to Massachusetts' minimum limits, which are $20,000/$40,000 for bodily injury and $5,000 for property damage.

As a motorcycle operator, you must also wear a US DOT standard helmet. State law requires your helmet to comply with the US DOT's Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard No. 218. Helmets meeting this standard will be labeled with stickers on the interior and exterior of the helmet.

When operating a motorcycle, operators must wear eyeglasses, goggles, or a protective face shield, unless the motorcycle has a windshield or screen.

ROAD TEST PROCEDURES

Road tests are scheduled close together; you must be on time for your test. If you are late for your appointment, you will not be tested and you will be required to pay the road test fee.

Before your road test begins, the RMV examiner will inspect your motorcycle to insure that it is registered, properly insured, inspected, and that all equipment is in good working order. The RMV examiner will also assess your knowledge of motorcycle equipment and controls.

For the road test, the RMV examiner will observe your ability to operate a motorcycle. Your road test will consist of some or all of the following riding skills:

- "Figure-Eights" and "360° Circles" in both directions without your feet touching the roadway
- Normal starts and stops
- Driving in traffic
- Crossing intersections
- Making turns
- Riding up and down hills

If you fail two (2) motorcycle road tests for a Class M license, you must enroll in and successfully complete the basic riding course approved by the Registrar of Motor Vehicles prior to scheduling another road test.

COMMON REASONS FOR FAILING A ROAD TEST

- You were at fault in an accident with another motor vehicle, pedestrian, or object.
- You were driving in a way that may have caused an accident or in a way the RMV examiner considered dangerous.
- You violated a motor vehicle law, rule, or regulation.
- You demonstrated a lack of experience safely operating a motorcycle.
- You refused to follow the RMV examiner's instructions.
- You drove contrary to the RMV examiner's instructions.

POLICIES ON CANCELLATIONS & FEES

Whenever a public school system cancels classes for weather-related reasons, road tests scheduled in the school system's community will be canceled automatically for the entire day. Road tests will also be canceled automatically when the Governor declares a state of emergency. If the Governor declares an emergency in a particular region, only road tests in that region will be canceled.

Road Test Examiners may also cancel road tests when weather conditions are considered unsafe. To determine if your road test has been canceled, please call the RMV's Phone Center. In any of the preceding cases, you may schedule a new road test at no additional fee.

However, you will be charged the road test fee if you...

- Fail the road test
- Are unprepared for the road test
- Are refused the road test because your motorcycle fails to pass the RMV examiner's inspection
- Fail to appear for or are late for your road test
- Cancel or reschedule your road test less than twenty-four (24) hours before your scheduled test time

PREPARING TO RIDE

As a motorcycle rider, what you do before you start a trip goes a long way toward determining whether or not you will get to where you want to go safely. Before taking a trip, a safe and responsible rider makes a point to:

- Check the motorcycle's equipment.
- Become familiar with the motorcycle.
- Use proper face and eye protection.
- Wear the right gear.

PROPER EQUIPMENT

Massachusetts law requires motorcycles to meet minimum safety equipment standards. A motorcycle operator must ensure that all safety equipment items are in good working order. Items include, but are not limited to, the motorcycle's horn, rearview mirror, fenders, mufflers, brakes, and lighting.

The front of the motorcycle must be fitted with a white, properly aimed headlight. If attached to a motorcycle, a sidecar must be fitted with a white forward facing light. The rear of the motorcycle must be fitted with a red tail light, a stoplight, and a white light to illuminate the license plate.

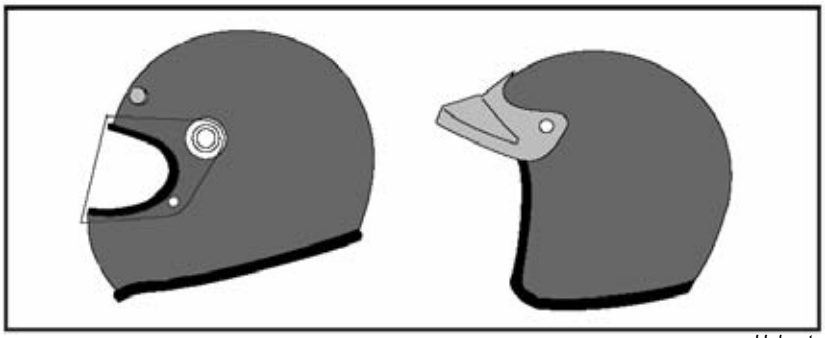
The motorcycle must be equipped with a secure seat for the operator. Should the motorcycle be equipped for carrying passengers, a secure seat, separate footpegs, and a handle strap must be provided. Motorcycle handlebars must not rise above an operator's shoulders when properly seated on the motorcycle.

A motorcycle rider can further help to protect him/herself by wearing the proper equipment. Selecting appropriate and properly fitting gear prior to riding can improve rider comfort and significantly reduce the risk of serious injury. In any crash, the rider has a far better chance of avoiding serious injury if properly equipped with an approved helmet, face and eye protection, and protective clothing.

According to the United States Department of Transportation (DOT) and National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), there were thousands of injuries in motorcycle related accidents last year. Furthermore, per vehicle mile traveled, motorcycle riders were more likely than automobile passengers to die in a traffic accident.

HELMET USE

According to NHTSA, motorcycle helmet use saves the lives of hundreds of motorcyclists annually. Although a motorcycle helmet cannot prevent many other types of injuries, it is effective sixty-seven percent (67%) of the time in preventing brain injury. Helmet use for motorcycle riders and passengers is mandatory under Massachusetts law.



Helmets

HELMET SELECTION

All motorcycle helmets sold in the United States are required to meet Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard No. 218, the performance standard which establishes the minimum level of protection motorcycle helmets must afford each user.

Primarily, there are two types of motorcycle helmets providing two different levels of coverage: the three-quarter and full faced styled helmets. Please inspect the motorcycle helmet to ensure that it meets DOT and state standards. Further inspect the motorcycle helmet for any imperfections or obvious defects such as cracks, loose padding, frayed straps, or exposed metal. Ensure that the motorcycle helmet fits snugly and that there are no distractions or blind spots. Finally, when riding, ensure that the motorcycle helmet is securely fastened to your head to maximize the level of protection in the event of an accident.

Not all motorcycle helmet damage is obvious. Prior to purchasing a used motorcycle helmet, first ensure that the helmet is produced by a manufacturer or distributor that will re-inspect the helmet for damage.

FACIAL PROTECTION

A plastic shatter-resistant faceshield (VESC-8) can help protect your whole face in the event of a crash and provides protection against wind, dust, dirt, rain, insects, and pebbles thrown up from vehicles traveling ahead. For the safety of the rider, it is recommended that you wear a full faceshield to protect the eyes and face from elements and road hazards that may otherwise distract the operator and increase the risk of injury.

Goggles protect your eyes, though they will not provide protection like a faceshield does. A windshield is not a substitute for a faceshield or goggles. Most windshields, eyeglasses, and sunglasses will not protect your eyes from the wind.

Tinted eye protection should not be worn at night or any other time where little light is available.

To be effective, eye and faceshield protection must:

- Be free of scratches
- Be resistant to penetration
- Give a clear view of either side
- Fasten securely so it does not blow off
- Permit air to pass through to reduce fogging
- Permit enough room for eyeglasses or sunglasses, if needed

DEFENSIVE CLOTHING

Selecting the appropriate and proper gear prior to riding can significantly reduce the risk of serious injury. Properly fitted riding gear or layered clothing that allows the body to breathe is recommended for riders of all skill levels. In cold or wet weather, your clothes should keep you warm and dry, as well as protect you from injury. You cannot control a motorcycle well if you are numb from the cold. Riding for long periods in cold weather can cause severe chill, fatigue, and even hypothermia. A winter jacket should resist wind and fit snugly at the neck, wrists, and waist. Good quality rain suits designed for motorcycle riding resist tearing apart or ballooning at high speeds.

Jackets and pants should cover your arms and legs completely. They should fit snugly, yet loosely enough to move freely. Leather and newer synthetic materials also provide adequate protection for the motorcycle rider. It is recommended that riders wear jackets even in warm weather to prevent dehydration. Many jackets are designed to protect you without allowing your body to overheat.

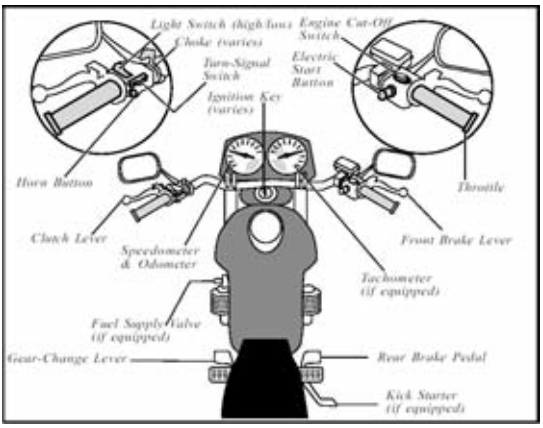
Boots and shoes should be high enough to cover your ankles and sturdy enough to give them support. Soles should be made of hard, durable, slip-resistant material. Keep heels short so they do not catch on rough surfaces. Tuck laces in so they will not catch on your motorcycle.

Gloves allow a better grip and help protect your hands in an accident. Your gloves should be made of leather or a synthetic, durable material capable of providing the necessary protection.

YOUR MOTORCYCLE

RIDER CHECKLIST

A motorcycle needs more frequent attention than other types of motor vehicles. It is strongly recommended that you make a complete check of your motorcycle prior to each ride. A thorough check of the motorcycle can help to identify a mechanical defect or equipment failure which might unnecessarily place the rider in a dangerous position.



Motorcycle controls

Before mounting the motorcycle, perform the following checks:

- Tires – Check the air pressure, general wear, and tread.
- Fluids – Check oil and fluid levels. Also inspect the underside of the motorcycle for signs of oil and gas leaks.
- Lighting – Check motorcycle switches to ensure that all lighting is working properly.
- Turn signals – Check both right and left turn signals to ensure that signals are working properly.
- Clutch and Throttle – The clutch should feel tight and smooth. The throttle should snap back when released.
- Mirrors – Clean and adjust both mirrors prior to riding.
- Brakes – Try the front and rear brake one at a time. Make sure each one feels firm and holds the motorcycle when the brake is fully applied.
- Horn – Make sure the horn is working properly.

FAMILIARITY

Make sure that you are completely familiar with the motorcycle prior to riding. This is particularly important if you are riding a borrowed motorcycle. If you are using an unfamiliar motorcycle:

- Make all the safety checks you would routinely perform on your own motorcycle.
- Thoroughly inspect the equipment, particularly the turn signals, horn, lighting switches, fuel control valve, and engine cut-off switch. You should be able to find and operate the equipment without having to look for it.
- Check the controls. Make sure you know the gear pattern. Work the throttle, clutch, and brakes a few times prior to riding. All controls react a little differently.
- Ride very cautiously until you become familiar with the manner in which the motorcycle handles. For instance, accelerate gently, take turns more slowly, and leave yourself additional room for either maneuvering or stopping.

RIDING WITHIN YOUR ABILITIES

This manual can help to educate novice and experienced riders alike about controlling motorcycle direction, speed, and balance. Professional instruction, practice, and safe responsible riding will further enhance rider safety. Recognizing the control needed to avoid injury is critical for riders of all abilities. Control begins with knowing your abilities and riding within them and the rules of the road.

BODY POSITION & POSTURE

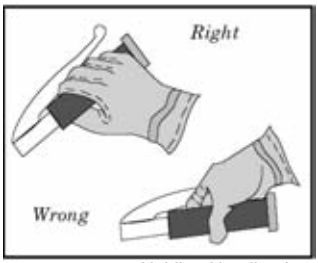
To property control the motorcycle, your body must be in the proper position. Your body should be relaxed but fairly erect. This allows you to use your arms to steer the motorcycle rather than to hold yourself up.

SEAT

Sit close enough to the handlebars to reach them with your arms slightly bent. Bending you arms permits you to turn the handlebars without having to stretch.

HANDS

Hold the handlegrips firmly to help keep your grip over rough surfaces. Start with you wrists flat. This will help keep you from accidentally using too much throttle, particularly if you need to reach for the brake suddenly. Adjust the handlebars so your hands are even with or below your elbows.



Holding Handlegrips

KNEES

Hold your knees firmly against the gas tank. This will help your balance as the motorcycle turns.

FEET

Keep your feet firmly on the footpegs to maintain balance. Do not drag your feet along the ground. If your foot catches on something, you could be injured and it could affect your control of the motorcycle. Keep your feet near the controls so you can use them quickly if needed. Do not point your toes downward, as they may get caught between the road and the footpeg.

TURNING

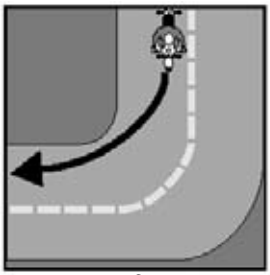
Normal turning

Approach turns and curves with caution. Acquiring the skills necessary takes practice. New riders often have more difficulty negotiating turns and curves than more experienced riders. Limiting motorcycle speed will aid riders in successfully negotiating the turns and helps to prevent crossing into oncoming traffic, leaving the roadway, excessive braking, and skidding out of control.

It is recommended that riders use these four steps for better control:

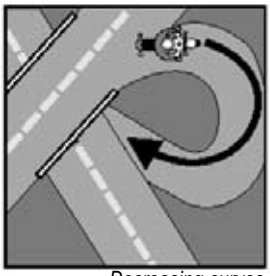
- **Slow -** Reduce speed before the turn by closing the throttle and, if necessary, applying both brakes.
- **Look -** Look through the turn to where you want to go. Turn just your head, not your shoulders, and keep your eyes level with the horizon.
- **Lean -** To turn, the motorcycle must lean. To lean the motorcycle, press on the handgrip in the direction of the turn. Press left—lean left—go left. Press right—lean right—go right. Higher speeds and tighter turns require the motorcycle to lean more.
- **Roll -** Roll on the throttle through the turn. Maintain steady speed or accelerate gradually.

Avoid deceleration through the turn. In normal turns, the rider and the motorcycle should lean together at the same angle. In slow tight turns, lean only the motorcycle and keep your body upright.

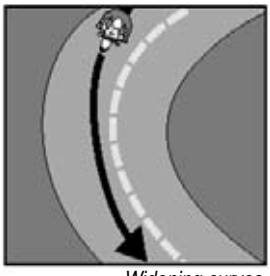


Constant curves

Multiple Curves

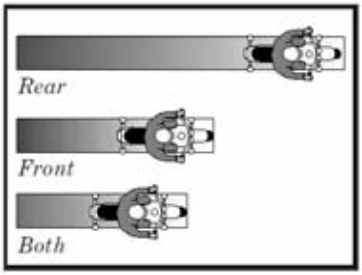


Decreasing curves



Widening curves

BRAKING



Your motorcycle has two brakes, one for each of the front and rear wheel. You need to use both brakes to stop effectively. The front brake is more powerful and can provide at least three-quarters of your total stopping power. The front brake is dangerous if not used properly. Here are some important tips to remember while braking:

- Use both brakes every time you slow down or stop. Using both brakes for even "normal" stops will allow you to develop the necessary skills for using both brakes properly in an emergency. Squeeze the front brake and press down on the rear. Grabbing at the front brake or jamming down on the rear can cause the brakes to lock, which results in control problems.
- Apply both brakes at the same time. Many individuals believe that the rear brake should be applied first. That is not true. The sooner you apply the front brake, the sooner it will start slowing you down.
- The front brake can be used in a turn, provided the proper technique is applied. When leaning the motorcycle, some of the traction is used for cornering, so less traction is available for stopping. A skid can occur if you apply too much brake.
- Some motorcycles have integrated braking systems that link the front and rear brakes together by applying the rear brake pedal. Consult the owner's manual on the operation and effective use of these systems.

SHIFTING GEARS

To properly shift gears, a rider must possess a certain level of skill and coordination. Shifting gears is more than simply getting the motorcycle to accelerate smoothly. Proper gear selection and execution when upshifting, downshifting, turning, or starting from a stopped position is important for safe motorcycle operation and minimizes the risk of an accident.

DOWNSHIFTING

It is important that a rider shift down through all gears when slowing down or stopping. Remain in first gear while stopped so you can move quickly if the need arises. Make certain you are traveling slowly enough when shifting into a lower gear. Traveling too fast may cause the motorcycle to lurch and the rear wheel to skid. Use added caution when riding downhill or shifting into first gear, for you may need to use the brakes in order to shift safely.

SHIFTING IN A TURN

It is recommended that a rider change gears prior to entering a turn, although in certain circumstances, shifting in a turn may be necessary. Do not attempt to upshift or downshift in a turn unless you can shift smoothly. A sudden change in power to the rear wheel can cause it to lock or spin. The result can be a skid.

STARTING ON A HILL

It is more difficult to start the motorcycle moving on an upgrade than on flat ground. There is always the danger of rolling backwards into a vehicle behind you. Here are some important tips to remember when starting on a hill:

- Use the front brake to hold the motorcycle while you start the engine and shift into first gear.
- Change to the foot brake to hold the motorcycle while you operate the throttle with your right hand.
- Open the throttle a little bit for more power.
- Gradually ease out the clutch.
- Release the foot brake when the engine begins to slow down. This means the engine is taking hold.
- Continue to release the clutch gradually. If you release it too quickly, the front wheel may come off the ground, the engine may stop, or both.

AVOIDING COLLISIONS

A safe and responsible rider significantly reduces the risk of being injured in an accident by riding defensively. As a rider, you cannot be certain that motor vehicle drivers will be aware of your presence. Riding defensively incorporates rider preparation, communication, and caution. To lessen your chances of being in an accident:

- Be visible - wear proper clothing, always use your headlight, and ride in the best lane position.
- Communicate your intentions - use the proper signals, brake light, and lane position.
- Maintain an adequate space cushion - following, being followed, lane sharing, passing, and being passed.
- Scan 10 to 15 seconds ahead of your path of travel.
- Identify potential hazards or conflicts and consider your escape options before they develop.
- Be prepared to act - remain alert and know how to carry out proper accident avoidance skills.

BE VISIBLE

In crashes involving motorcycles, motor vehicle drivers often cite the lack of rider visibility as the leading cause of the accident Both from ahead and from behind, a motorcycle's outline is much smaller than that of other motor vehicles. Therefore, even if a motor vehicle driver recognizes your presence, you are not necessarily safe. Often it is easy for motor vehicle drivers to mistake a rider's distance and speed because smaller vehicles appear farther away and seem to be traveling slower than they actually are. A rider can take several measures to help motor vehicle drivers recognize their presence on the road.

CLOTHING

Most accidents involving motorcycles occur during the daylight hours. The use of brightly colored clothing and reflective tape on motorcycle helmets and equipment helps make riders more noticeable. Selecting bright orange, red, yellow, and green jackets or vests will increase rider visibility. Should you choose to not wear any brightly colored clothing, consider a reflective vest which will alert drivers of your presence.

HEADLIGHT

The best way to alert motor vehicle drivers of your presence on a motorcycle is to keep the headlight on at all times. Research shows that during daylight hours a motorcycle with its headlights on becomes twice as noticeable to oncoming drivers. Riders should consider using their motorcycle's high-beam lights during daylight hours for added visibility.

BRAKE LIGHT

A motorcycle's brake light is usually not as noticeable as the brake lights on an automobile, particularly if the motorcycle's tail light is on. Flashing your brake lights before slowing or stopping will help alert fellow drivers of your intentions. It is especially important to flash your brake lights if being followed too closely ("tailgated".) Often a tailgater is focused solely on your motorcycle and may be unaware of a road hazard ahead. Use caution at locations where a motor vehicle driver might not expect a rider to turn, slow, or stop.

COMMUNICATING YOUR INTENTIONS

The signals used by a motorcycle rider are similar to those used by a motor vehicle operator. Signals are important as they communicate to others traveling on the road what your intentions are. Coupled with a rider's added vulnerability, signals take on even greater significance. Riders should also be familiar with hand signals and routinely incorporate both manual and electronic signals as part of their riding strategy.

Stop

Right

Left

TURN SIGNALS

Turn signals perform two essential functions:

1. Turn signals alert fellow drivers of what your intentions are. It is recommended that a rider always use turn signals when changing lanes, even when a vehicle may not be present.
2. Turn signals help make a motorcycle rider more visible. A driver traveling behind you is more likely to see a turn signal than a taillight.

It is good practice to use turn signals, even when planning to do the obvious, for it allows drivers to react accordingly. Failing to cancel your turn signal can be as problematic as not activating it. A turn signal left blinking is dangerous and may cause a driver anticipating a turn to enter your path of travel. Check your instrument panel to determine whether your turn signal has been properly canceled.

HORN

A motorcycle horn is helpful in getting the attention of another motor vehicle operator or pedestrian. Motorcycle riders should be prepared to use their horn in the event of an emergency. Horn use is also recommended when the ability to safely pass a motor vehicle entering your lane of travel is in question. A motorcycle rider should be ready to stop or swerve from danger in the following situations:

- A driver in the adjacent lane is quickly approaching another vehicle and may attempt to overtake or pass the rider.
- A driver opening the door of a parked motor vehicle threatens rider safety.
- A pedestrian walking or bicyclist riding in the street.

POSITION

Size can work to the advantage of the motorcycle rider. Unlike motor vehicle operators who have few options as to the position of their vehicle within a lane of travel, motorcycle riders can properly position the cycle to heighten visibility. Each marked traffic lane gives a motorcycle rider three distinct paths of travel, as illustrated in the image to the right. To maximize the chances of being seen, a motorcycle rider should:

- Avoid traveling in another vehicle's "blind spot." When passing a motor vehicle, get through the driver's blind spot as quickly as possible. Make the determination early whether to pass the motor vehicle or to drop back. Approach the motor vehicle with caution, and once alongside, speed up and pass quickly.
- Take a position that enables a motor vehicle traveling ahead the opportunity to spot you with the use of vehicle mirrors. Use a combination of lane positioning and vehicle lighting to assist fellow motorists in recognizing your motorcycle.
- When parking a motorcycle, position or angle the motorcycle so that drivers can be aware of its presence. Efforts to enhance motorcycle visibility will reduce the risk of being unnecessarily struck or injured by a motorist unaware of your presence.

Lane Position


Blind Spots

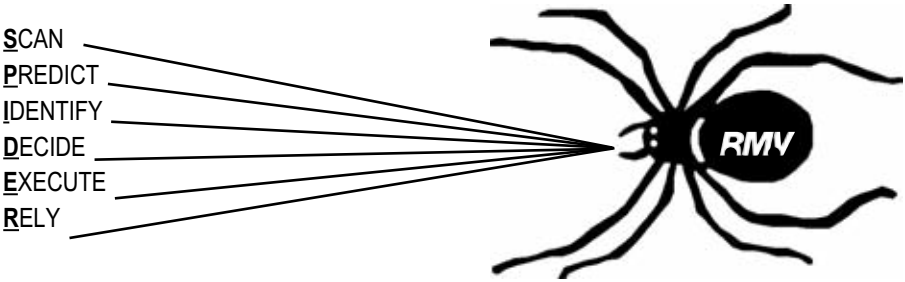

Following


Parking at curb

LOOKING FOR TROUBLE

Despite the many precautions a motorcycle rider can take, there is no guarantee that a motorist will see you. A safe and responsible rider is always "looking for trouble" to avoid. This defensive riding strategy helps to reduce the probability of being seriously injured or killed in an accident. SPIDER is an acronym for the process detailing how a rider accomplishes creating this safe riding environment.

Let us examine the process:



SCAN — Monitor and aggressively search for potential hazards while riding. Maintain an adequate space cushion between vehicles to enhance rider safety. Anticipate and formulate a strategy for escaping a hazardous situation.

PREDICT — The distance, speed, and direction of a hazard significantly impacts the overall strategy employed by the rider. It is important for the rider to anticipate and consider the effect a hazard may have on fellow motorists. Recognizing and estimating the consequences of your actions are steps a safe and responsible rider takes in ensuring safety.

IDENTIFY — Locate hazards and the potential for danger. Awareness and visibility will assist the rider in making a safe and responsible decision given the following circumstances:

- Vehicles sharing the road with you may move quickly and unexpectedly. A rider's reaction to uncertain traffic conditions must be both quick and accurate to minimize the likelihood of an accident.
- Animals and pedestrians create additional stress for riders and increase the potential for danger. Their unpredictable nature may influence and alter riding strategy.
- Stationary objects include potholes, guardrails, bridges, roadway signs, hedges, and vegetation. These objects will not move into your path but may complicate your riding strategy.

DECIDE — Make a decision on how to act based upon the types of hazards or conflicts you may encounter. The following measures can be taken to help minimize the hazard or conflict:

- Communicate your presence to fellow motorists with the assistance of vehicle lighting, equipment, and clothing.
- Adjust vehicle speed to the traffic conditions and hazards which are present. The traffic environment will dictate whether to accelerate, slow down, or come to a stop.
- Adjusting vehicle position will depend upon the nature of the hazard and space cushion available to the rider. Changing lanes, lane position, or direction may minimize the potential for being injured in an accident.

EXECUTE — Follow through on the decision you have made. Make a commitment to riding within your ability or skill level.

RELY — Rely on this process to create a safe riding environment. Riders are encouraged to routinely incorporate the SPIDER process and defensive riding strategy to avoid potentially dangerous or fatal driving situations.

THE ROAD AHEAD

Experienced and responsible riders focus their attention on the road ahead. This practice of routinely looking well ahead limits the rider's exposure to dangerous or hazardous driving conditions. In the city, it is recommended that a rider look from one-half (½) block to one full block ahead. On the highway, it is recommended that a rider look as far ahead as possible while maintaining cycle control. Establishing an adequate space cushion between vehicles gives the rider plenty of time to adjust to the traffic environment. Having an adequate space cushion helps the rider avoid panic stops or sudden swerves that can pose an even greater danger. It is recommended that a rider keep the following travel tips in mind:

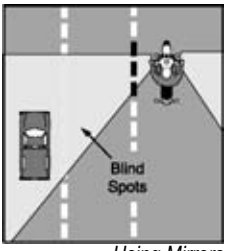
- Constantly check road surfaces for slippery spots, bad bumps, broken pavement, loose gravel, wet leaves, or objects lying in the road. Pay particular attention on curves and ramps where oil and gravel are known to collect.
- Use vehicle size to your advantage and make the necessary adjustments. Looking past and through vehicles traveling ahead which are stopping or attempting to turn limits the potential for an injury or accident.
- Use added caution when approaching intersections and areas of heavy congestion. Monitor pedestrian and vehicle traffic that may enter your path of travel from side streets or driveways. In heavy traffic where the potential for injury increases, focus on finding an escape route which offers the most protection.

THE ROAD BEHIND

While it is important to monitor vehicle traffic and hazards ahead, a rider cannot afford to ignore situations that may develop behind. Vehicles traveling behind the rider pose an equally grave danger. The rider must recognize the potential for being struck from behind and seriously injured. Responsible riders must do more than simply checking vehicle mirrors. The ability to anticipate vehicle lane changes while safely adjusting riding behavior comes only through riding experience. However, riders of all skill levels can reduce the risk of being seriously injured or killed by riding defensively.

USING YOUR MIRRORS

Checking vehicle mirrors is a critical component in riding safety. It is recommended that riders frequently check mirrors as part of their on-road riding routine. Like passenger motor vehicles, all motorcycles have "blind spots" that can impair or distort vehicle visibility. Checking vehicle mirrors every few seconds will enable the rider to respond appropriately and safely when traffic conflicts or hazards arise. Traffic conditions are constantly changing so it is important that a rider recognize and use vehicle mirrors in the following situations:



Using Mirrors


Slowing


Blind Intersections

- Pay particular attention when slowing the cycle or coming to a sudden stop, as vehicles following behind may be unaware of the action a rider has taken. If the vehicle following behind is dangerously close, it may be best for the rider to continue moving forward to avoid serious injury.

- Intersections pose the greatest danger for the motorcycle rider and should be approached with extreme caution. An intersection is any location where traffic may cross a rider's path of travel. Vehicles following closely behind may be unaware of the hazard or danger facing the rider, thereby reducing the space cushion available and jeopardizing rider safety.

- Prior to changing lanes, a responsible rider exercises caution and incorporates a head turn to visually check for vehicles that may be approaching or attempting to pass. An experienced rider recognizes that vehicles traveling behind may not be expecting a sudden turn at locations such as intersections, side streets, and driveways.

Many motorcycles are equipped with rounded "convex" mirrors. These mirrors allow greater visibility of the road behind but conversely make objects appear farther away than they actually are. If your motorcycle has convex mirrors and you are unfamiliar with their use, practice until you become a good judge of distance.


Convex Mirrors

KEEPING YOUR DISTANCE

It is extremely important that a rider maintain an adequate cushion of space between vehicles. Increasing the distance between vehicles will provide the rider with additional time that may be needed to safely avoid a traffic hazard. The experienced rider recognizes that space is the best protection against being seriously injured or killed in a motor vehicle accident.

DISTANCE IN FRONT

Motorcycles do not require the same stopping distance as other motor vehicles. However, it is recommended that riders subscribe to the "two-second" distance rule developed to help riders avoid potentially dangerous situations. On the road ahead, pick a fixed object like a sign post or tree. When the vehicle in front of you reaches that object, count out "one one-thousand, two one-thousand…..". If you reach the object before you count two, you are following too closely. Slow down until you have put enough distance between you and the other vehicle. This rule provides riders with additional reaction time that may be needed to address adverse traffic conditions.

A larger cushion of space may be needed if the traffic and road conditions are unfavorable to the rider. If the area of travel is unfamiliar, heavily congested, or the pavement is slippery, it is recommended that riders subscribe to a "four-second" (or more) distance rule. This added cushion of distance is valuable and may be necessary given the traffic conflict or hazard facing the rider.

DISTANCE BEHIND

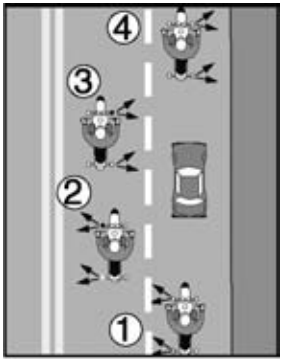
Many motorcycle riders acknowledge that vehicles travel too closely behind. Should this tailgating situation arise, increase the stopping distance between the vehicles ahead to ensure that a proper space cushion exists in the event of an emergency or traffic hazard. If the opportunity presents itself, change vehicle lanes allowing the motorist's vehicle to safely pass.

DISTANCE TO THE SIDE

Because of vehicle size, motorcycle riders have the unique ability to change positions within their lane of travel while managing space to the sides, thus creating a greater cushion of space. This added flexibility offers the rider an opportunity to maintain the margin of safety required for safe operation. An experienced and responsible rider changes positions as traffic conditions change. The following are situations that may require a change in lane position.

PASSING

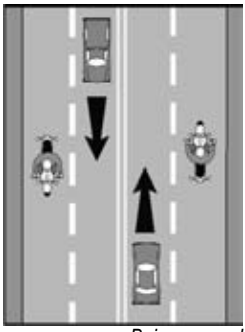
When attempting to pass a vehicle, position the cycle in the left portion of the travel lane at a safe following distance to increase rider visibility. Prior to activating your signals, check for on-coming traffic and potential road hazards. When there is sufficient space, use vehicle mirrors and a quick "head-check" to gauge traffic conditions behind and to the sides of the motorcycle before signaling and accelerating to the desired lane of travel. Quickly pass through the operator's blind spot. Once safely past the vehicle, again use vehicle mirrors and "head-checks" to gauge traffic conditions before signaling and returning to your original lane of travel.



Passing

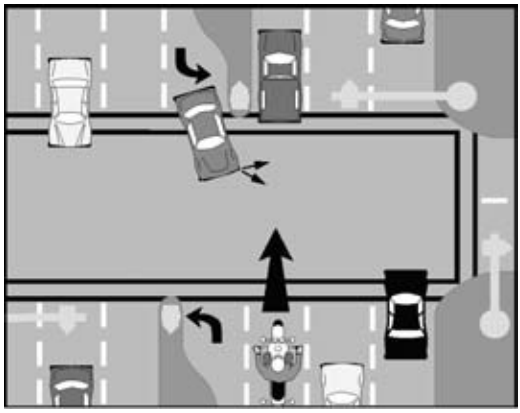
BEING PASSED

When being passed by a vehicle, position the cycle in the center of the travel lane. This added cushion of space prevents the rider from being sideswiped by passing vehicles or inadvertently struck by road objects and debris. Traveling in the center of the travel lane further protects the rider from wind shear or gusts created by larger vehicles which can significantly alter cycle control and stability.


Being passed

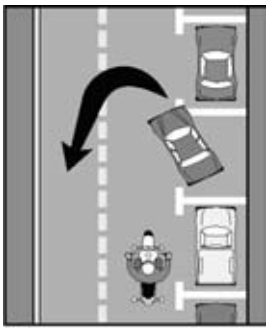
INTERSECTIONS

Statistically, intersections are one of the most dangerous areas of travel for motorcycle riders. When approaching an intersection, select a lane position that increases cycle visibility. If a vehicle can enter your path of travel at an intersection, assume that it will. Remain alert and search for vehicles turning ahead or into your path of travel. Pass with caution and adjust cycle speed to a level that promotes safe and responsible operation.


Intersections

PARKED VEHICLES

When passing parked vehicles, position the cycle in the left portion of the travel lane to avoid problems caused by either operators exiting their vehicles or pedestrians stepping between vehicles. Cautiously approach vehicles pulling away from curbs or parking spaces. The potential for injury with vehicles making U-turns presents yet another danger to the rider. To increase rider safety, maintain an adequate space cushion and maximize the benefits of lane position.



Parked vehicles

LANE SHARING

It is recommended that motorcycle riders avoid sharing lanes with other vehicles. All motor vehicles are permitted to use the full lane of travel to ensure safe operation. Motorcycle riders are prohibited from riding alongside motor vehicles within a marked travel lane. Position the cycle in the center of the travel lane to discourage motorists from attempting to squeeze by the cycle. Motorists are more prone to this type of behavior when traveling in heavy traffic, passing vehicles, turning, and entering or exiting highways. Further, a responsible rider recognizes the potential for injury and avoids traveling between rows of stopped motor vehicles.

CARS ALONGSIDE

It is recommended that motorcycle riders avoid riding alongside other motor vehicles. Experienced riders recognize that vehicles traveling in the adjacent lane may unexpectedly change direction forcing the rider into a potentially dangerous situation. Adjust cycle speed until a proper and adequate cushion of space has been established between vehicles.

MERGING TRAFFIC

Do not assume that the operator of a motor vehicle will recognize your presence when merging onto a highway. Minimize the potential for danger by providing ample space to those motor vehicles entering your path of travel.

Merging traffic

DANGEROUS SURFACES

Slippery and uneven surfaces, obstacles, railroad tracks, and grooves or gratings can significantly affect motorcycle traction and balance. Riders should avoid traveling on surfaces that provide poor traction.

SLIPPERY SURFACES

Wet pavement, mud, snow and ice covered roads, lane markings, steel plates, and manhole covers are all examples of surfaces that provide poor traction to the rider. To reduce the risk of being injured while traveling on slippery surfaces, a rider can take certain preventative measures.

Reducing cycle speed on slippery surfaces is one preventative measure. A rider must recognize that slowing or stopping on slippery surfaces requires greater distance. When road conditions are unfavorable, it is particularly important that a rider further reduce cycle speed prior to entering a curve where skidding and loss of control are more probable.

Avoiding sudden moves on slippery surfaces is a second preventative measure. A sudden change in direction or speed may result in a cycle skid or loss of control, exposing the rider to even greater harm. On slippery surfaces, a rider should focus on accelerating, shifting gears, turning, and braking as smoothly as possible. If the slippery surface is small enough to safely traverse, riders are encouraged to hold in the motorcycle's clutch until safely past the hazard.

Using both the front and rear brakes on slippery surfaces is a third preventative measure. A rider should have confidence in using the front brake even on slippery surfaces. Applying the brakes gradually will help prevent the wheels from locking and skidding. When traveling over icy surfaces, a rider should avoid braking until safely past the hazard.

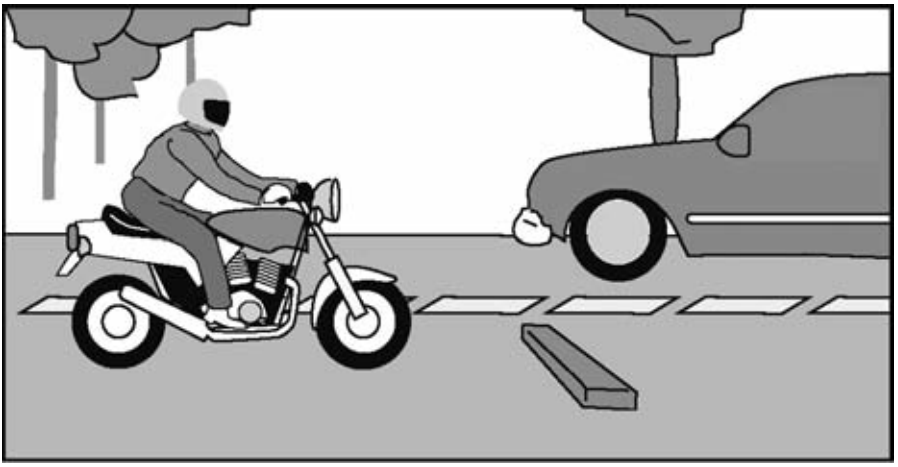
Experienced riders consistently search for the best possible pavement to travel. On slippery surfaces, riders should use added caution and aggressively search for hazards that may interfere with the safe operation of the motorcycle. Adjusting lane position and cycle speed may be necessary and prudent when surfaces are slippery. A good rider must be able to recognize the following surface hazards:

- When traveling on wet pavement, it is recommended that riders follow in the wheel tracks of motor vehicles ahead. Center lane travel may be hazardous due to the accumulation of oil left on the surface by passing motor vehicles. Riders should use added caution when approaching intersections and toll-booths.
- When stopping or parking the cycle, be sure to search for oil spots that may cause feet to slip. Securing the proper footing will help prevent riders from losing their balance or falling.
- When approaching intersections, curves, or freeway entrance and exit ramps, be certain to remain away from the road's edge where dirt and gravel often collect. Choose a lane position that minimizes the risk of injury. Further recognize that rain, snow, and ice covered surfaces pose a hazard until completely dry.

VERY SLIPPERY AREAS

It is strongly recommended that riders avoid snow and ice covered surfaces. Experienced riders recognize that maintaining balance and cycle control are difficult on such surfaces. However, should the rider be unable to avoid such a surface, keep the cycle straight up and proceed as slowly as possible, with feet skimming the surface for added balance should the cycle begin to fall. If riding is impractical in sections, consider "straddle-walking" the motorcycle to a more suitable surface.

UNEVEN SURFACES OR OBSTACLES

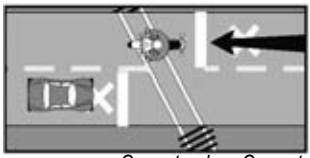


Uneven surfaces or obstacles such as broken pavement, bumps, potholes, railroad tracks, and loose debris pose a separate danger to the rider. The rider must first be able to identify the obstacle and next determine whether there is sufficient time and opportunity to safely clear the obstacle. If both time and space permit, the rider should slow the cycle or change lane positions to avoid the obstacle. If posed with having to ride over or clear the obstacle, the rider should approach at a ninety degree angle (90º). It is important in clearing an obstacle that a rider:

- Slow the cycle to reduce impact.
- Make certain the cycle is straight up.
- Just prior to reaching the obstacle, accelerate slightly to lighten the front wheel.
- Rise slightly off the seat with weight on the footpegs to minimize the chances of being thrown from the bike. Rising slightly off the seat allows the rider to absorb and transfer the shock of the obstacle to the rider's knees and elbows.
- Pull off the road to check tires and rims before proceeding.

RAILROAD OR TROLLEY TRACKS

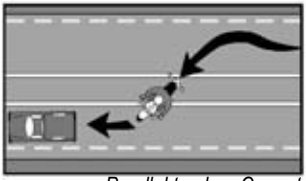
Motorcycle riders are able to safely cross railroad tracks at angles as sharp as forty-five degrees (45º). Riders are discouraged from altering their ordinary course of travel to cross railroad tracks at ninety degree angles (90º) . This action may be more dangerous and result in the rider crossing into on-coming traffic.



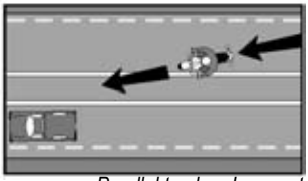
Cross tracks - Correct

Cross tracks - Incorrect

Motorcycle riders must proceed more cautiously when crossing trolley tracks or pavement seams. Trolley tracks or pavement seams running parallel to a rider's course of travel are considered "edge-traps" and may cause loss of balance or cycle control. It is recommended that riders make a quick and sharp turn across trolley tracks and pavement seams. Riders are encouraged to cross trolley tracks or pavement seams at angles of at least forty-five degrees (45º).



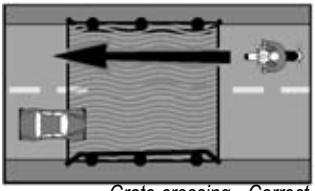
Parallel tracks - Correct



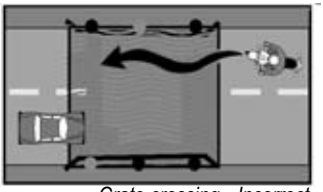
Parallel tracks - Incorrect

GROOVES AND GRATINGS

Riding over rain grooves or metal bridge gratings may cause the motorcycle to weave and can create an unsettling feeling for the rider. Typically this activity is not dangerous provided the rider limits sudden or extreme movements while attempting to cross these types of surfaces. It is important for riders to maintain their speed and direction until safely on solid road surfaces.



Grate crossing - Correct

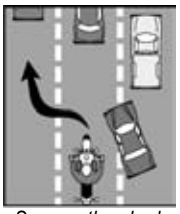


Grate crossing - Incorrect

SWERVING OR TURNING QUICKLY

Even cautious riders may be forced to swerve or turn quickly to avoid hitting an object in their path of travel. This sudden adjustment or evasive maneuver may be the only way for a rider to avoid a collision and serious injury. It is important for riders to remain in their lane of travel in the event of an emergency. Even when the obstacle is a motor vehicle, often there is sufficient space within the lane for the rider to safely pass. A good rider will adjust body and cycle position while remaining focused on the obstacle.

A swerve can be described as any sudden change in direction by the rider. It can be either two quick turns or a rapid shift to the side. This maneuver can be safely performed by applying a small amount of hand pressure to the handlegrip in the direction a rider wishes to travel. This action will cause the motorcycle to lean quickly. The sharper the turn, the more the motorcycle will lean.

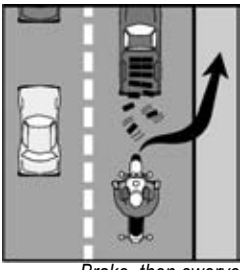


Swerve, then brake

When safely past the hazard, apply a small amount of hand pressure to the opposite handlegrip to return the cycle to its original direction of travel. It is important when performing such a maneuver to keep knees snugly against the tank with feet firmly planted on the footpegs for added stability and cycle control. Do not attempt to lean with the motorcycle; let the motorcycle move beneath you. Riders should not attempt to brake while swerving, as a skid could result and endanger the rider.

QUICK STOPS

To avoid striking an object, riders may be forced to quickly stop their motorcycle. To quickly stop the cycle, apply both brakes firmly and steadily. Should the front wheel lock, immediately release the front brake lever and gently reapply brake pressure. Should the rear wheel lock, provided the cycle is traveling in a straight line, keep it locked until the cycle has come to a complete stop. Under such circumstances, riders are often able to safely control the cycle despite having the rear wheel locked.



Brake, then swerve

If forced to stop the cycle quickly while turning or riding a curve, concentrate on straightening the cycle before attempting to stop. When the cycle is upright, apply firm and steady brake pressure. If there is no opportunity to straighten the cycle, apply both brakes gradually while increasing brake pressure until safely stopped.

FLYING OBJECTS

Occasionally, motorcycle riders are struck by insects, small pebbles, or debris from passing motor vehicles. A rider can significantly reduce the risk of injury by wearing the proper clothing and facial protection. Riders opting not to wear facial protection may be struck in the eyes, face, or mouth by such objects. A rider who has been struck by such an object should remain focused on the road ahead until the opportunity to safely stop the cycle presents itself. Once safely to the side, riders should check the cycle's equipment for damage while making the necessary repairs before returning to the road.

ANIMALS

A motorcycle rider should make every effort to avoid hitting an animal. However, it is recommended in heavily congested traffic areas that riders avoid swerving into adjacent lanes of travel to avoid hitting the animal. Riders have a better chance of surviving impact with an animal as opposed to impact with a motor vehicle.

Motorcycles have a tendency to attract dogs, which may attempt to chase or catch the cycle. Should the rider be chased, it is important not to kick at the animal, for the rider could easily lose balance and cycle control. The rider should downshift and approach the animal slowly. Upon reaching the animal, the rider should speed up quickly and leave the animal safely behind.

CARRYING PASSENGERS & CARGO

Experienced and responsible riders recognize that carrying passengers or heavy loads requires additional skills. The added weight significantly changes motorcycle handling, balance, acceleration, and stopping distance. Riders are encouraged to practice riding with lighter loads before attempting to carry passengers. This adjustment in riding strategy promotes safe riding and reduces the risk of serious injury to the rider or passengers.

PASSENGER SAFETY & INSTRUCTION

Passenger safety starts with proper direction and instruction. Riders should not make the presumption that passengers are familiar with motorcycle handling, control, or balance. As a routine practice, good riders will instruct their passengers on cycling basics prior to starting their trip. Under Massachusetts law, all passengers are required to wear US DOT approved helmets. Passengers are encouraged to wear protective clothing and face protection. The following are recommended practices concerning passenger safety:

- Climb aboard the motorcycle after the engine has been started.
- Sit comfortably close to the rider without hindering rider control.
- Hold tightly to the rider's waist or hips for added balance.
- Keep feet firmly planted on the cycle's footpegs, even at stops.
- Remain directly behind and lean with the rider through turns and curves.
- Limit conversation and movement when the cycle is in operation.

PASSENGERS & EQUIPMENT

Having the proper equipment is essential for safe and responsible riding. Riders should be certain that the cycle is properly equipped for carrying passengers. Riders should not have to adjust seating position to accommodate passengers. The cycle's seat should be large enough to hold both the rider and passenger without crowding. Passengers must be able to place their feet firmly on footpegs located at the rear of the cycle. Proper footing helps to maintain passenger balance and prevents accidental falls from the rear of the cycle. A secure handle strap must be provided when carrying passengers. Riders and passengers should remain committed to wearing protective clothing and face protection while riding.

RIDING WITH PASSENGERS

Carrying a passenger will cause the motorcycle to respond and handle in a different manner. The added weight of the passenger will require the rider to adjust operating speed on rougher surfaces, sloped terrain, and curved roadways. Minor adjustments to the cycle's suspension and tire pressure may be required depending on passenger weight. Riders should incorporate a larger cushion of space when stopping or slowing the cycle. Warning passengers of approaching hazards will reduce the risk of injury and surprise. If the rider must speak with the passenger while riding, a slight head turn while maintaining focus on the road and traffic conditions ahead is suggested.

CARRYING LOADS

Small loads can be carried safely if properly secured and fastened to the motorcycle. Riders are encouraged to secure loads low to the seat and not against rear seat frames. Loads mounted behind the rear wheel axle upset cycle balance and affect braking. Placing loads low and over wheel axles helps to maintain cycle stability and control.

If the motorcycle is equipped with saddlebags, make certain the load distribution in each bag is approximately the same. Failing to distribute the load evenly may cause the cycle to pull to one side. Overloading may also cause the bags to catch in the wheel or chain, locking the rear wheel and prompting the cycle to skid.

It is recommended that riders securely fasten the loads with elastic cords. Elastic cords help prevent the loads from shifting or falling while riding. Checking loads frequently for proper balance and positioning will increase rider safety and reduce the risk of injury.

GROUP RIDING

The size of your motorcycle makes it difficult for fellow motorists to recognize your presence. If done so in a manner that neither endangers nor interferes with the free flow of traffic, riding with other cyclists can help to increase rider visibility and safety. Concentration and communication are essential to group rider safety. The following recommendations will enhance safety and reduce the risk of injury for those cyclists riding together in groups.

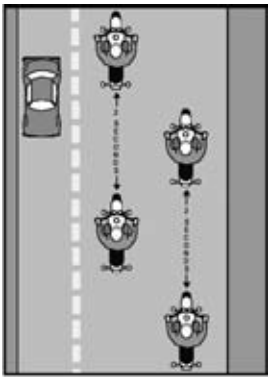
SMALL GROUPS

Traveling together in smaller groups will provide riders with the necessary time and space to adjust to traffic hazards or objects that may interfere with safe operation. Small group travel will also enable fellow motorists to safely pass while reducing the risk of rider separation. Should the number of cyclists traveling together exceed five or six, it is recommended that the riders split into two separate travel groups to ensure safety.

GROUP COHESION

Communication and planning are essential to group cohesion and safety. Planning ahead will help reduce the risk of injury and rider separation. The following are recommended practices for group riding:

- Be certain that all riders know the route and destination ahead of departure. This knowledge will reduce rider anxiety and concerns of group separation.
- Place inexperienced riders towards the front of the group where they can be carefully watched by more experienced riders.

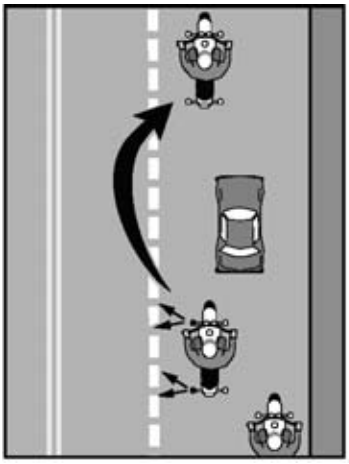


Staggering

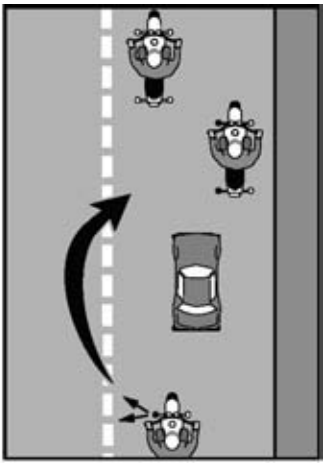
- If you are leading the group, aggressively scan ahead for obstacles or traffic hazards that may interfere with safe operation.
- Keep a sufficient amount of space between all riders traveling in the group. A closely configured group of riders is less prone to separation and easily recognized by fellow motorists.
- Adjust cycle speed to maintain group cohesion. Use your cycle's mirrors to recognize a change in pace or direction. Should a rider fall behind, slow group speed to prevent separation.
- Signal lane changes early to afford those riders traveling behind the opportunity to safely complete the lane change.
- Riders should avoid "pairing up" while traveling. Operating directly alongside another motorcycle is a dangerous practice and jeopardizes both rider and group safety.
- Group riders are encouraged to travel in a "staggered" formation. This staggered riding strategy places the lead rider to the left side of the travel lane with the second rider just behind and to the right side of the travel lane. The third rider would follow in behind the first rider, leaving a minimum two second travel cushion between the first rider. The fourth rider would follow in behind the second rider, leaving a minimum two second travel cushion between the second rider. Riders should break with formation and travel single file when approaching turns or curves and when entering or exiting freeways.

PASSING INFORMATION

Riders traveling in a staggered formation are directed to pass motor vehicles one rider at a time. When there is sufficient space, the lead rider should quickly pass the motor vehicle and promptly return to the original lane of travel. Once safely past, riders are encouraged to maintain their original lane positions. The remaining riders are directed to pass a motor vehicle in the same manner.



Group passing (Stage 1)



Group passing (Stage 2)

NIGHT RIDING

Nighttime operation can be dangerous because a rider's ability to see and be seen by fellow motor vehicle operators is limited. It is recommended that riders adjust their riding behavior to compensate for this limited visibility. This adjustment includes reducing cycle speed, maximizing headlight usage, and increasing following distance. This cautious riding strategy will provide riders with an opportunity to safely pass obstacles and traffic hazards that may interfere with safe operation.

Massachusetts law requires riders to use their headlights from one-half (½) hour after sunset to one-half (½) hour before sunrise.

GETTING OFF THE ROAD

Rider fatigue, equipment adjustments, mechanical defects, and traffic emergencies may force a rider to get off the road. Good riders keep a watchful eye on traffic conditions while safely making their way to the roadside. Riders should be certain to signal motor vehicles traveling behind of their intention to change lanes or direction.

Experienced riders will scan roadside surfaces to determine if the terrain is firm enough to safely ride on. Slowing motorcycle speed when entering soft shoulders and grass medians will enable riders to maintain cycle balance and control.

Once safely off the road, position the cycle as far as possible from travel lanes to avoid being struck by passing motor vehicles. To prevent the cycle from tipping, use added caution when setting the cycle's kick-stand on sloped shoulders and soft surfaces.

RULES OF THE ROAD

All travel on public roadways is controlled by a system of signs, signals, pavement markings, driving laws, rules, and regulations. No matter what type of vehicle you are driving or what kind of road you are driving on, you must obey these "rules of the road."

You must learn how to properly ride on:

- Streets, roads, alleys, and avenues
- Traffic rotaries (circles)
- Highways, expressways, and freeways

SPEED LIMITS

Riding too quickly (speeding) is one of the major causes of motor vehicle crashes. To ensure safe roadways, speed laws in Massachusetts are strictly enforced and carry severe penalties. The faster you ride, the greater the distance you need to react to a situation and to stop your motorcycle safely.

The fundamental speed law for motor vehicles is that you must never travel faster than is reasonable and proper for the current conditions and public safety.

Regardless of what a posted speed limit sign says, how fast you ride must depend on several factors:

- Traffic conditions — number of vehicles on the road and the speeds at which they are traveling
- Road conditions — quality of the road surface (rough or smooth); the amount of water, ice, or snow on the road surface; and the width of the roadway
- Weather conditions and visibility — adverse situations, including rain, snow, ice, dust, and wind
- Pedestrians or bicyclists — people who might be traveling along or crossing the road

Regardless of any posted speed limit, you must decrease your speed if any hazard exists. Never ride faster than the posted speed limit. Sample speed limit signs appear on this and the next page. All speed limits are based on ideal driving conditions. If conditions are hazardous, you must adjust your speed and ride more slowly.

Most roadways in the state have posted speed limits. Be aware of changes in speed limits as you ride on different kinds of roads or enter and exit highways. Limited-access highways, like the interstate routes, have posted speed limits ranging from 50 to 65 mph, while smaller highways have limits of 55 mph or lower.

Also, be aware that some highways post minimum speed limits as well. In Massachusetts, the minimum speed on interstate and limited access highways is 45 mph.

Unless posted otherwise, your speed would not be considered reasonable and proper if you were riding over...

- 20 mph in a school zone
- 30 mph in a thickly settled or business district
- 40 mph outside a thickly settled or business district
- 50 mph on a highway outside a thickly settled or business district

SCHOOL ZONES

The 20 mph speed limit on roads near schools can be posted in various ways. The signs stating such limits may be accompanied by flashing yellow lights or posted for certain hours of the day. Look closely for signs indicating that you are approaching or entering a school zone.

When entering a school zone, please ride carefully. Scan aggressively for children crossing the street or riding bicycles. Be aware of school safety patrols or crossing guards that may be directing traffic.

TRAFFIC SIGNALS

Traffic signals are lights that control the movement of vehicles and pedestrians, usually at intersections. You must know what each light means and obey its signals at all times.

Traffic signals typically consist of three round lights: red, yellow, and green, from top to bottom. There are other types of signals, such as single flashing lights or colored arrows.

STEADY RED

A steady red light means “STOP.” Do not proceed until the light turns green. You may make a right turn on a red light only after coming to a complete stop. You must also yield to pedestrians or other vehicles in your path before turning. You may not turn on red if a NO TURN ON RED sign is posted.

If you are traveling on a one-way street and turning left onto another one-way street, you are allowed to turn left on a red light. Come to a complete stop and yield to pedestrians and other vehicles before turning.

STEADY RED ARROW

A steady red arrow means the same as a steady red stop circular signal (see the preceding Steady Red section), but a steady red arrow applies only to vehicles intending to proceed in the direction of the arrow. The same rules apply for TURNS ON RED.

FLASHING RED

A flashing red light means the same as a STOP sign. You are required to bring your motor vehicle to a complete stop. Obey the right-of-way laws and proceed when it is safe to do so. If a white stop line or crosswalk line is painted on the pavement, you must stop before the line. When there are no pavement markings, you must stop as close to the intersection as needed to view traffic in both directions without entering the intersection.

STEADY YELLOW

A steady yellow light means the traffic signal is changing from green to red. You must stop if it is safe to do so. If you are already stopped at an intersection or a stop line, you may not proceed.

FLASHING YELLOW

A flashing yellow light is a warning. Proceed with caution, and stay alert. Look both ways when crossing an intersection.

STEADY GREEN

A steady green light means go, but only after you have yielded to other vehicles, bicycles, or pedestrians in the road. If you are crossing an intersection, make sure you have enough room to make it completely through. Never block an intersection. You may make a turn as long as you have enough space to complete the turn and avoid creating a hazard. Look out for drivers who are not obeying traffic signals or are racing through intersections.

GREEN ARROW

A green arrow means you may proceed and turn in the direction of the arrow. As long as a green arrow displays for your turning lane, pedestrians and oncoming vehicles should be stopped for red lights. Look closely for signs authorizing turns only on a green arrow.

TRAFFIC LIGHTS NOT WORKING

If traffic signals are not working as they normally do, they will simply flash red or yellow lights. In these cases, follow the rules for flashing lights. If signals are blacked out and not functioning, you must treat the intersection as having stop signs in all directions. Proceed when it is safe to do so.

PEDESTRIAN SIGNALS

Special lighted signals are often used at crosswalks to indicate when pedestrians may cross a roadway. Pedestrians must obey the DON'T WALK and WALK signals.

LAWS FOR MOTORCYCLE RIDERS & PEDESTRIANS

Motorcycle riders and pedestrians alike are obligated to follow certain traffic regulations and road rules which help ensure safety. The following laws help to promote the safe interaction between motorists and pedestrians.

MOTORCYCLE RIDERS

- You must yield to any pedestrians entering or using a crosswalk in your travel path.
- Never let your motorcycle block a crosswalk.
- You must yield to pedestrians if your traffic signal is red or if it is red and yellow.
- Never pass a vehicle that has stopped or is slowing for a pedestrian.

PEDESTRIANS

- Use a crosswalk if one is available.
- At crosswalks with pedestrian signals, use the push button on the signal pole and wait for the WALK signal. Intersections without push buttons will give you WALK signals automatically.
- Before you cross a roadway, stop at the curb and look left and right for traffic. Be alert. Be especially aware of cars turning onto the road you are crossing.

TRAFFIC SIGNS

Traffic signs control the flow of traffic, warn you of hazards ahead, guide you to your destination, and inform you of roadway services. As indicated below, traffic signs are intentionally color coded to assist the operator.

RED - stop

GREEN - direction

YELLOW - general warning

BLACK&WHITE - regulation

BLUE - motorist service (e.g., gas, food, hotels)

BROWN - recreational, historic, or scenic site

ORANGE - construction or maintenance warning

STOP AND YIELD SIGNS

The STOP sign always means come to a complete halt and applies to each vehicle that comes to the sign. You must stop before any crosswalk or stop line painted on the pavement. Come to a complete stop, yield to pedestrians or other vehicles, and proceed carefully. Simply slowing down is not enough. If a 4-WAY or ALL WAY sign is added to a STOP sign at an intersection, all traffic approaching the intersection must stop. The first vehicle in the intersection of a four-way stop has the right of way.

When you see a YIELD sign, slow down and be prepared to stop. Let traffic, pedestrians, or bicycles pass before you enter the intersection or join another roadway. You must come to a complete stop if traffic conditions require it.

REGULATORY SIGNS

The United States is now using an international system of traffic control signs that feature pictures and symbols rather than words. The red-and-white YIELD and DO NOT ENTER signs prohibit access or movement.

WARNING SIGNS

Yellow warning signs alert you to hazards or changes in conditions ahead. Changes in road layout, proximity to a school zone, or some special situation are examples of warning signs. Slow down and obey the sign. Disregarding a warning sign is not only dangerous, it is against the law.

GUIDE SIGNS

In the guide signs category, you will find route markers, distance-and-destination signs, and informational signs.

Green signs give highway directions and guide you through highway interchanges.

Blue signs list motorist services, like gas, food, and lodging. Brown signs direct you to public recreational areas, state and national parks, historical points of interest, and scenic sites.

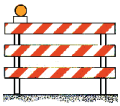
In Massachusetts, numbered state highway routes are posted on white, rectangular signs with black letters and borders. Interstate highway signs are blue, red, and white shields.

CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE ROAD WORK WARNINGS

When people are repairing or constructing roadways, their work areas are protected from traffic by orange warning signs and other devices. These signs and devices may be mounted with warning flags or yellow flashing lights. These warnings help to guide pedestrians and vehicle traffic safely through a work zone and past any hazards.


Drum

Many of these warning signs use the same symbols as yellow warning signs, but you should take extra care when orange signs are posted. Traffic and road conditions around work zones often change quickly.


Barricade

In addition to posting orange warning signs, road work crews can use a number of channeling devices to keep traffic in lanes and away from hazards. Sometimes, electric warning arrow signs will direct traffic flow near a work zone.


Tubar Marker

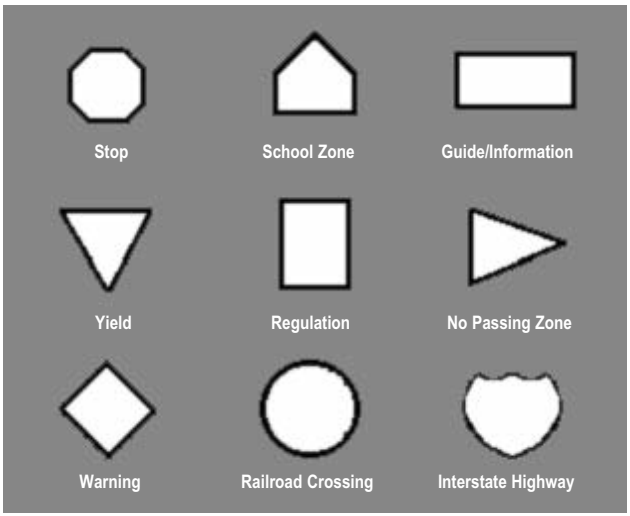
Massachusetts has recently implemented a system which provides for civilian flaggers to work in certain work zones and construction sites and for police officers to work in other sites.


Traffic Cone

When a flag person or police officer is directing traffic around a work zone, you must obey the flagger's or officer's signals or directions.

Know signs by their appearances so you can recognize them at a distance.

Work Zone
Flag person



Know traffic signs by their shapes

Regulatory

Yield


No right turn


No left turn


No U-turn


No trucks


No pedestrians


No bicycles

No parking allowed between posted hours

Traffic moves only in direction of arrow

You may not overtake another vehicle

You may *not* turn right after stopping at a red light

All traffic must go left


Keep to the right of the upcoming median or lane divider

Warning


Traffic signal ahead


Lane merging from right, watch for other traffic


Divided highway begins


Winding road, do not pass


Roundabout ahead


Playground


Divided highway ends


Crossroad ahead


Road curves right


Stop ahead


School zone


Two-way traffic


Road entering from the right

Area off paved road is soft dirt and could be hazardous


Road narrows or right lane ends


School crossing


Road slippery when wet


Road ends at junction

You may not cross the yellow line to pass


Traffic may flow on both sides of sign


Pedestrian crossing


Deer crossing

Railroad crossing ahead

Maximum height allowed

Guides and Directions

Interstate highway route marker


Information


Gas


Telephone


Food

Massachusetts state highway route marker


Hospital


Lodging


Access for those with disabilities


Picnic area

Junction with a numbered route ahead

Destination directions

Notice of highway exits, in miles

Point of interest

Motorist services

Destination distances, in miles

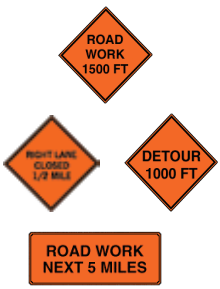
Highway mile markers

Parking facilities

Freeway interchange sign

Highway rest area

Road Work



Notice

Work in progress on the side of the road

Road crew flag person ahead


Maintenance or public utility crew ahead

Roadway detour directions


Lighted directional signs

RAILROAD CROSSINGS

A round warning sign will usually alert you to an upcoming railroad crossing. When you see this sign, slow down and prepare to stop. If you see or hear a train approaching, do not speed up and try to beat the train to the crossing.

The point at which train tracks cross a road is marked with a white crossbuck sign. If more than one track crosses a road, the number of tracks is posted below the crossbuck.

A railroad crossing may also feature red flashing lights, a bell, and a red-and-white striped gate that is lowered across the roadway when a train is passing. If the lights begin to flash, you must stop at least 15 feet before the light post or gate and remain stopped until the gate raises and the lights stop flashing. Failure to stop is a violation that carries a heavy fine. Even if you don't see a train approaching, never drive around a lowered gate or ignore the flashing lights.

PAVEMENT MARKINGS

Lines, symbols, and words painted on a roadway help to direct riders and control traffic flow. You must know what the different lines and colors mean and obey them as you would traffic signs or signals.

White and yellow lines are used along pavement edges and between lanes to keep vehicles in line. These lines may be solid or broken (long dashes), single or double. A solid white or solid yellow line that turns into a dotted line (short dashes) is a continuation of the line through an intersection or a highway interchange.

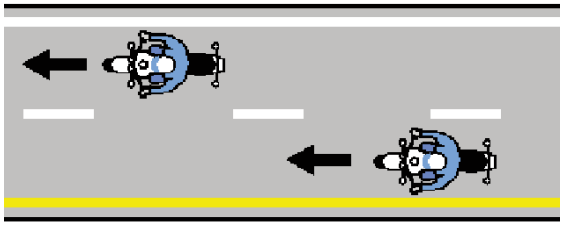
Unless you are turning, exiting a highway, or changing lanes, always stay between the lines marking your lane.

WHITE LANE LINES

White lane lines separate lanes of traffic moving in the same direction. Single white lines may also mark the right edge of the pavement.

BROKEN WHITE LANE LINE

A broken white lane line separates two lanes traveling in the same direction. Once you have signaled, and if it is safe to do so, you may cross this line when changing lanes.



SOLID WHITE LANE LINE

A solid white lane line marks the right edge of the roadway or separates lanes of traffic moving in the same direction. You may travel in the same direction on both sides of this line, but you should not cross the line unless you must do so to avoid a hazard.

DOUBLE SOLID WHITE LANE LINE

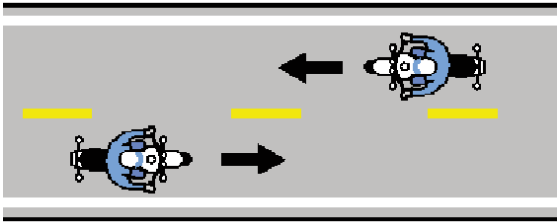
A double solid white line separates two lanes of traffic going in the same direction. Crossing a double solid white line is prohibited.

YELLOW LANE LINES

Yellow lane lines separate lanes of traffic moving in opposite directions. Single yellow lines may also mark the left edge of the pavement on divided highways and one-way streets.

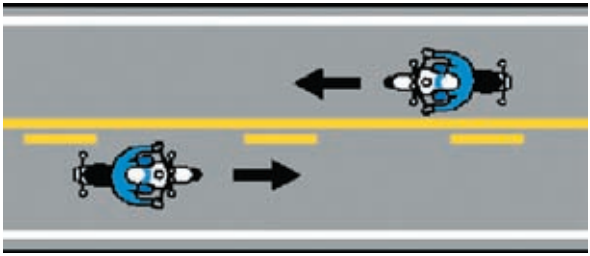
BROKEN YELLOW LANE LINE

A broken yellow lane line separates lanes of traffic moving in opposite directions. Stay to the right of the line, unless you are passing a vehicle in front of you. When passing, you may cross this line temporarily when it is safe to do so.



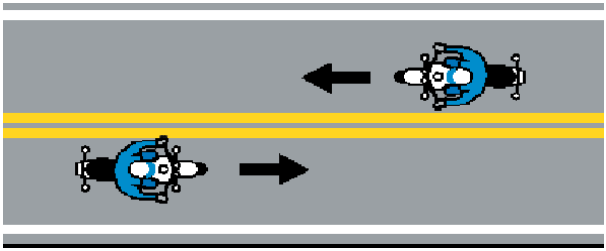
DOUBLE YELLOW LANE LINES: ONE SOLID, ONE BROKEN

As with all yellow lane lines, the one-solid-one-broken combination keeps opposing lanes of traffic separated. If the solid yellow line is closer to you, you may not cross the double yellow line. If the broken line is closer to you, you may cross the line only to pass another vehicle and only when it is safe to do so.



DOUBLE YELLOW LANE LINES: BOTH SOLID

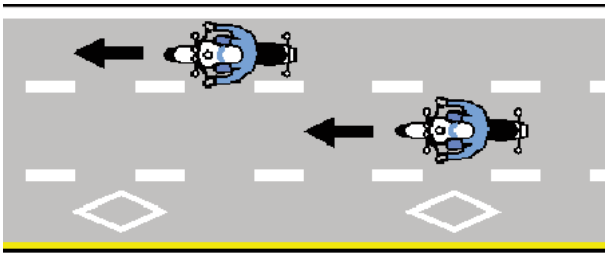
Two solid yellow lane lines prohibit vehicles moving in either direction from crossing the lines to pass another vehicle. You may not cross these lines unless turning left when it is safe to do so.



WORDS AND SYMBOLS

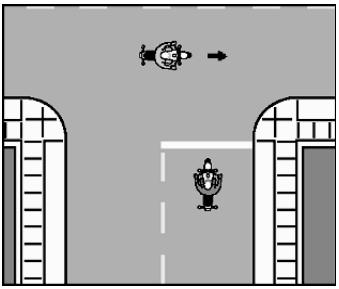
Words or symbols may be painted on roadway surfaces to help guide, warn, or regulate drivers. Words or symbols are often used with traffic signs, signals, and other pavement markings. White arrows show lane directions or restrictions.

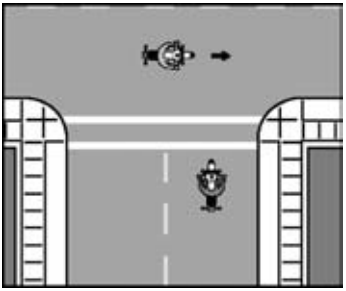
A white diamond alerts you to a special lane restriction, like high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) only, bus only, or bicycle only.



STOP LINES AND CROSSWALKS

An intersection or a pedestrian crossing controlled by a stop sign, yield sign, traffic signal, or traffic officer may have a solid white STOP line painted across it. You must stop your vehicle behind this line.





A crosswalk is a pair of white lines painted across a lane that guides pedestrians from one side of the road to the other. A painted crosswalk is also a warning to drivers that pedestrians are crossing the road at that point. Crosswalks may have diagonal or vertical lines painted between the two main lines for added emphasis.

LANE USE & RESTRICTIONS

USING LANES

Always use traffic lanes as they are defined by pavement markings and road signs. Many intersections have special lanes marked for turns. Follow the rules of the road, using the proper lanes for turning and riding straight ahead.

On roadways with two or more lanes in your travel direction, use the right lane for riding unless...

- You are passing another vehicle.
- You are making a left turn.
- The right lane is blocked.

Additional rules pertaining to proper lane use follow below:

- As a general rule, do not use a highway breakdown lane as a travel or passing lane. On some highways, however, motorists may use the breakdown lane as a travel lane during “rush hour.”
- Never change lanes in the middle of an intersection. It is illegal and dangerous.
- If you come to a curve in the road and cannot see ahead, keep to the right and slow down.

MECHANICAL PROBLEMS

Mechanical problems create both uncertainty and danger for the rider. In the event of a mechanical breakdown, it is imperative that the rider remain focused on traffic conditions and the road ahead. The following are guidelines which may assist the rider in handling a mechanical emergency safely.

TIRE FAILURE & BLOWOUTS

Tire failure and blowouts pose a serious risk of injury to the rider and fellow motorists. Poor handling and stability are often reliable indicators of tire failure. Experienced riders who recognize these signs are able to react quickly to the situation. Riders experiencing such difficulty should avoid sudden braking and immediately pull off to the side of the road to check for tire failure.

Front and rear tire failures must be treated differently. Front tire failure is particularly dangerous for it affects cycle steering and control. For riders experiencing front tire failure, it is recommended that the rider shift his or her weight to the rear of the motorcycle for added balance and stability. Rear tire failure may cause the cycle to swerve harshly form side to side. For riders experiencing rear tire failure, it is recommended that the rider remain seated with no weight shift to either the front or rear of the cycle.

Should either tire go flat while riding, hold the handle grips firmly and attempt to maintain a straight course of travel. Presuming you are able to identify the failure, gradually apply the brake to the tire which has not failed. As the cycle begins to slow, cautiously move towards the edge of the roadway where it is safe to stop.

STUCK THROTTLE

A stuck throttle on a motorcycle may be remedied by twisting the throttle back and forth several times. This twisting may free the throttle cable and allow the operator to regain engine control. If the rider is unable to free the throttle, it is recommended that the rider activate the engine cut-off switch while holding in the cycle's clutch. This action will remove power from the cycle's rear wheel, allowing the rider to safely regain control. Once safely stopped, the rider should check the throttle cable carefully to locate the source of trouble. A good rider will ensure that the throttle is working properly before continuing to ride.

WOBBLE

A situation may arise when the front wheel of the motorcycle and handlebars suddenly start to shake from side to side. This action can be described as "wobble" and is most often attributable to improper loading, unsuitable cycle accessories, or incorrect tire pressure. Some common causes are loose wheel bearings and spokes, bent or mis-aligned wheels, windshields or farings improperly mounted or unsuitable for the cycle, improper weight distribution, and overloading.

Attempting to accelerate out of a wobble will only make the cycle more unstable. A rider can safely manage wobble by grasping the handlegrips firmly and slowly, and closing the throttle to reduce cycle speed. Riders are discouraged from applying the brakes, as braking could make the wobble worse. Shifting rider weight as far forward and down as possible will lessen the vibration and enable the rider to regain sufficient control. The rider should safely stop the cycle and attempt to identify the wobble, making load shifts and mechanical adjustments as necessary. If the rider is unable to determine the cause of the wobble, have the motorcycle inspected thoroughly by a qualified professional motorcycle mechanic.

CHAIN PROBLEMS

A motorcycle chain that slips or breaks while riding may cause the rear wheel of the cycle to lock and skid, endangering the rider. The rider may first notice slippage when either accelerating quickly or riding uphill. Tightening the chain may initially help to reduce the slippage. If the problem persists, inspect for a worn or stretched chain or bent sprockets, which may necessitate chain replacement.

A rider will recognize a chain break due to the instant loss of power to the cycle's rear wheel. If this situation should arise, roll off and close the throttle while gently braking to a safe stop at the road's edge. Chain slippage or breakage can be avoided through routine and proper maintenance.

ENGINE SEIZURE

An engine and its moving parts require oil and lubricants to move smoothly. Without the proper lubricants, moving parts cannot move freely, thereby creating friction which may cause the engine to overheat and seize. Engine seizures are most often attributable to low oil pressure. To avoid engine seizures, riders should routinely check the cycle's oil and lubricant reservoirs to ensure they are sufficiently full. Should the engine seize while riding, riders are instructed to squeeze and hold the clutch lever to disengage the engine from the rear wheel. Once the cycle has safely come to a stop, stand away from the cycle and let the engine cool before attempting to restart.

SPECIAL RULES FOR MOTORCYCLES

- Do not ride along pavement lines or between lanes of traffic.
- Ride no more than two abreast.
- Unless your motorcycle can travel safely at minimum posted speeds, do not travel on highways or expressways.

RESTRICTED LANES

You must not ride in lanes posted as restricted, except when preparing for a turn.

RIDING ON HIGHWAYS

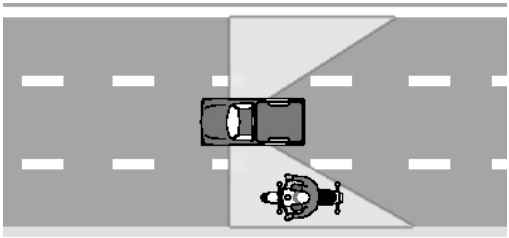
Riding on highways, expressways, and freeways can make any new motorcycle rider nervous. The following are some useful tips for riding on such roadways.

ENTERING AND EXITING THE HIGHWAY

- Make sure you are in the proper lane well in advance so you can safely enter or exit the highway.
- Yield the right-of-way to drivers already on the highway.
- As you approach and enter a highway travel lane, increase your speed to match that of vehicles already on the road.
- If you miss your exit, do not stop. Never back up on the highway. Get off the highway at the next exit and look for signs showing you how to rejoin the road in the other direction.
- Be sure to signal your exit at least 500 feet before you reach the exit ramp.
- As you leave the highway and drive along the exit ramp, slow to the posted exit ramp speed limit.

SAFE & RESPONSIBLE RIDING

- Make sure your vehicle is in good operating order and can maintain highway speeds.
- Stay to the right and only use the left lane for passing. If you are traveling on an expressway with three lanes, treat the far right lane as a slower-speed through lane, the middle lane as a faster through lane, and the far left lane as the passing lane.
- Use your mirrors and your directional signals when changing lanes. Remember these three steps: (1) look, (2) signal, (3) move. Also, check your blind spots before making your move.
- Do not ride in another operator's blind spot. If you see yourself in another operator's blind spot, safely ride through the blind spot as quickly as you can.
- Be alert for cars entering the highway and any vehicles or pedestrians using the breakdown lane.
- Do not weave in and out of traffic.
- Be aware of road construction signs, work crews, and signs requiring you to reduce speed or change lanes.
- Avoid highway hypnosis. If you've been riding for a long period and feel drowsy, you should get off the highway at the next exit, rest stop, or service area.
- If you plan to ride a long distance, stop and stretch after every 2 hours or every 100 miles.



RULES FOR PASSING

In general, the law requires you to ride on the right side of the road. When passing is allowed, you should pass on the left. You should pass a pedestrian, bicyclist, or motor vehicle only when it is necessary and safe to do so. **You may not exceed the speed limit when passing**. If you have any doubt, do not pass. Never use a breakdown lane, the shoulder of a road, or a sidewalk for passing another vehicle.

INTERSECTIONS

It is illegal to block an intersection with your motorcycle. When riding through an intersection, you must follow any directions given to you by signs or traffic signals. **You may not enter an intersection or ride across a crosswalk unless there is enough room to safely ride through to the other side. Obstructing the paths of other vehicles or pedestrians in an intersection or a crosswalk causes traffic jams and violates traffic law.**

TURNS

Many motor vehicle crashes are caused by improper turns. In general, take the following steps to ensure safe turning:

1. Plan for the turn. Do not turn suddenly.

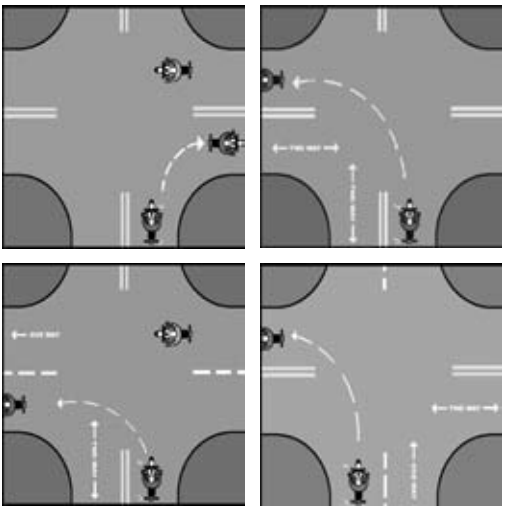
2. Signal your turn at least 100 feet before making the turn. On a highway, signal at least 500 feet before a turn. It is best to signal before you apply your brakes to make your intentions known to other drivers.

3. Reduce your speed.

4. Check your mirrors for traffic behind you and check the blind spot on your turning side.

5. Give the right-of-way when necessary.

6. Complete the turn carefully, and make sure you turn into the proper lane.



TURNS ON RED

After coming to a complete stop at a red traffic light, you are allowed to turn right on red after giving the right-of-way to pedestrians and other vehicles, unless a NO TURN ON RED sign is posted. You may turn left on red following the same rules only if you are turning from a one-way street onto another one-way street.

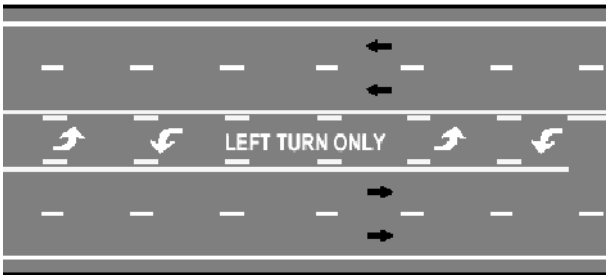
U-TURNS

A U-turn is a tight left turn that reverses your direction. Always use added caution when reversing your direction. Unless a NO U-TURN sign is posted, you are allowed to make a U-turn as long as your path is clear and it is safe to do so.

- You may only make a U-turn from the lane closest to the center line.
- Make sure you have enough room to complete the turn. Don't create a hazard for oncoming vehicles.
- Do not attempt a U-turn at the crest of a hill, near a curve, or at any other point at which you or other drivers cannot see from 500 feet away.

LEFT TURNS FROM CENTER LANES

On some two-way roads, a center lane may be marked as a common left-turn lane to be used by vehicles in both directions. You may not travel in a center turning lane.



RIGHT-OF-WAY RULES

This section summarizes many right-of-way rules. Other, related rules, like giving the right-of-way to emergency vehicles, are presented in the appropriate sections of this chapter.

So-called “right-of-way rules” help drivers decide how to handle traffic situations that are not determined entirely by signs or signals. These rules are based on safety and courtesy and they do not give you any “rights.” Remember, the right-of-way is something you give, not take.

If another driver fails to follow these rules in a certain situation, you should always give the right of way to ensure safe operation.

PEDESTRIANS

You must always yield to pedestrians who are walking in or crossing a roadway. Also note these rules concerning pedestrians:

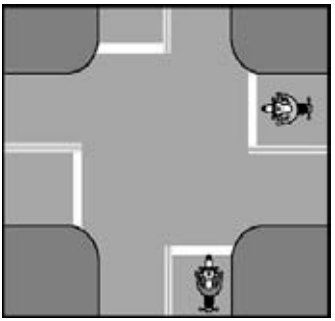
- If you are stopped at a traffic signal and the light turns green, you must yield to any pedestrians already in the crosswalk before proceeding.
- When turning, look for pedestrians crossing your intended path. Pedestrians have the right-of-way if using a sidewalk or crossing a driveway or an alley.
- Always yield to blind people crossing a street. If a blind person using a special cane or a guide dog is trying to cross the street, you must stop until the person has crossed safely to the other side.

INTERSECTIONS NOT CONTROLLED BY SIGNS OR SIGNALS

If you come to an uncontrolled intersection, slow down, look left and right for oncoming traffic, and proceed if the way is clear. However,

- You must yield the right-of-way to any vehicle that has entered the intersection from your right or is approaching from your right.
- Look for any traffic approaching from the left. Even though you may have the legal right-of-way, make sure that the other driver is yielding to you before you proceed.

FOUR-WAY STOP



At an intersection controlled by stop signs in all directions, you must yield the right-of-way to...

- Another vehicle that has already come to a full stop at the intersection
- A vehicle on your immediate right that has stopped at the intersection at the same time as you

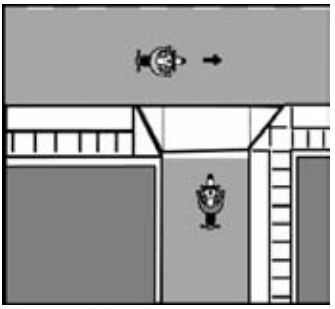
Confusion can develop at four-way stop intersections. You should try to make eye contact with the drivers of other vehicles at the intersection to better judge their intentions and avoid accidents.

TURNING LEFT

When making any left turn, you must first yield the right-of-way to any:

- Oncoming vehicle
- Vehicle already in the intersection
- Pedestrians or bicyclists crossing your intended path of travel

PRIVATE ROADS, DRIVEWAYS, AND UNPAVED ROADS



If you are entering a paved roadway from a private road, a driveway, or an unpaved road, you must stop first and give the right-of-way to pedestrians, bicyclists, or vehicles traveling along the road you are entering.

THROUGHWAYS

If you approach a designated throughway, you must yield the right-of-way to traffic on the throughway before you turn.

INTERSECTION OF SINGLE OR TWO LANE ROAD AND MULTIPLE LANE ROAD

If you are traveling on a single or two-lane road and come to an intersection with a larger road, you must yield the right-of-way to vehicles driving on a divided highway or a roadway with three or more lanes.

ROTARIES

Because only a few states in America have traffic rotaries (traffic circles), many drivers are unfamiliar with rotaries' right-of-way rules. Be especially careful and generous when extending the right-of-way to other drivers in and near rotaries. When you approach a rotary, you must yield the right-of-way to any vehicles already in the rotary. If traffic in the rotary is heavy, stop at the edge of the rotary and wait until you can enter safely.

SCHOOL BUSES

Yellow school buses have flashing red lights and stop signs that fold out from the driver's side. School pupil transport vehicles, like vans, station wagons, or family sedans, have flashing red lights and SCHOOL BUS signs on their roof. School Bus Drivers use these warning signals when letting pupils on and off the vehicle.

No matter which side of the road you are traveling on, if you come upon a school bus or a school pupil transport vehicle with its lights flashing and a stop sign extended, you must stop. It's the law. Remain stopped until the lights stop flashing or the stop sign folds back.

A first violation of this law can result in license suspension and a fine of $250.

Even after the warning signals have stopped, you should proceed slowly and continue to search for children that could be crossing.

The only exception to this law is if a school bus has stopped on the other side of a divided highway with a barrier between travel directions. In this case, you do not have to stop.

BUSES AND TROLLEYS

Especially in urban areas, you must take extra care when driving near public transport buses and trolleys. Buses stop frequently. Be courteous and make way for buses signaling to pull away from bus stops.

State law is very specific about driving near trolleys and their tracks:

- If you come to a trolley letting passengers on or off, you must not drive any closer than within 8 feet of the trolley passenger step.

- Look for oncoming trolleys before crossing any tracks. Do not turn in front of a trolley if one is approaching.
- Maintain a safe distance between your motorcycle and a trolley if the trolley is sharing the roadway. A trolley's path is limited to the tracks. A trolley driver cannot swerve to avoid you.

ROAD WORKERS AND REPAIR CREWS

Although road construction and maintenance sites are often well posted with warning signs, you must take extra care to ensure the safety of anyone working on a roadway. Orange warning signs and work equipment usually means that people are on foot nearby. Follow roadwork signs carefully, and stay alert. Look for sudden changes in road direction or condition. Be prepared to stop.

ANIMALS AND HORSE-DRAWN VEHICLES

Always give the right-of-way to any animal that someone is leading, riding, or driving. Animals are easily frightened by motor vehicles, so when you approach any animal or horse-drawn vehicle:

- Reduce your speed.
- If the animal or vehicle is coming toward you or is crossing your path, stop and allow the animal to pass.
- If the animal or vehicle is traveling in the same direction you are, allow plenty of room for passing safely, and use reasonable speed.
- Do not sound your horn or make a loud noise.
- If the animal you are passing appears frightened, you must pull your vehicle to the roadside and stop.
- Proceed only when it is safe.
- You must stop if a rider or driver signals you to do so.

In rural areas, take extra care when passing "hay rides" which are usually animal drawn and carrying several passengers.

SLOW-MOVING VEHICLES

Most farm vehicles, construction rigs, and other slow-moving vehicles have orange warning signs mounted to the rear of the vehicle. If you approach such a vehicle, reduce your speed and use the same caution you would with bicyclists and pedestrians. Allow plenty of space around the vehicle if you plan to pass.

FUNERAL PROCESSIONS

If you meet a funeral procession on a roadway, you must yield the right-of-way until all vehicles in the procession have passed. It is illegal to cut through or disrupt any vehicles in a funeral procession.

PARKING REGULATIONS

Parking regulations are generally determined by state law but are enforced by local cities and towns. If you are parking in a business or residential district, you must position your vehicle within 12 inches of the curb, except where angled parking is allowed. Parking spaces on roadway edges are often marked by white road lines. You must park your vehicle between these lines. In Massachusetts, you may not park your vehicle in certain places, including:

- In a zone posted with a NO PARKING, NO STANDING, or NO STOPPING sign
- In a bus stop or taxi stand
- In a zone and at a time posted for street cleaning
- In a posted loading zone
- Within 20 feet of an intersection
- In a crosswalk, in front of a driveway, or in front of a handicap-access ramp
- In a zone posted for HP-DV parking only (disabled person plates or placards, disabled veteran plates). Violating this parking regulation carries a heavy fine
- Within 10 feet of a fire hydrant or fire lane
- On a sidewalk, curb, center traffic island, or median
- During a weather or roadway emergency
- Facing the wrong way against traffic
- On a state or an interstate highway, unless authorized
- On a roadway in a rural area or outside a thickly settled district
- In a traffic lane next to a row of parked vehicles (double parked)
- To make non-emergency repairs to your vehicle

If you violate a parking regulation, you may receive a citation with a fine. Unpaid parking tickets will prevent you from renewing your license or vehicle registration.

PARKING METERS

Many public parking spaces are regulated by coin-fed meters. Meter regulations are usually in effect during posted days and hours. Also, in most areas a maximum time limit is posted.

If you exceed the limit or fail to pay the meter fee, you may be issued a parking citation.

PARKING PERMITS

Many cities and towns in the state issue special parking permits to residents. Certain residential streets have **RESIDENT PERMIT PARKING ONLY** signs. If you do not have a permit or a special visitor's placard, you may not park in these zones. Contact your local community for information on obtaining a permit.

MISC. RULES OF THE ROAD

The following are motor vehicle traffic laws that have not been covered in a specific section. It is illegal to:

- Drive on a bet or wager
- Engage in drag racing
- Throw garbage or glass onto a roadway or onto public or private land
- Throw lighted cigarettes or anything else from a motor vehicle that can cause a fire near a forest or open field
- Bypass or cut out a motor vehicle's muffler system

You must return used motor oil, transmission fluid, and other hazardous materials to the place you bought the materials. The garage or store that sold you the goods is responsible for disposing of the goods.

BEING IN SHAPE TO RIDE

Whether it be in the form of beer, wine, or hard liquor, alcohol is a depressant that slows your reflexes, increases your reaction time, and distorts your vision and judgment. At the same time, alcohol often makes you feel more confident about your riding ability, causing you to take chances while riding that you normally would not take. This is a dangerous combination that often leads to serious motor vehicle accidents and tragic deaths.

Even one alcoholic drink can affect your ability to ride safely. The effects of alcohol can increase significantly if you are tired, emotionally upset, or have not eaten. No one is immune from the effects of alcohol consumption. Despite the rider's efforts to concentrate, one's ability to operate any vehicle safely is impaired after drinking. Alcohol is a drug that reduces the mental faculties and motor skills of all operators.

BLOOD ALCOHOL CONTENT (BAC)

When you drink an alcoholic beverage, your body works hard to eliminate the alcohol from your system. You do not digest alcohol as you do food. Alcohol is processed by your liver and kidneys, and this process takes time. There is no quick way to remove the alcohol from your system. Drinking black coffee, taking a cold shower, exercising, or eating might make you feel more alert after drinking alcohol, but none of these actions has any effect on how quickly alcohol leaves the body.

Ideally, if you have had any alcoholic beverage, you should not ride or operate any motor vehicle. Determining exactly what is "too much" alcohol can be difficult. The amount of unprocessed alcohol in your body is measured as blood alcohol content (BAC), which can be determined by blood or breath test analysis. Your BAC depends on several factors:

- Your body weight
- How much alcohol you have had to drink
- The amount of food consumed prior to drinking alcohol
- The length of time you have been drinking alcohol
- The speed at which your body processes alcohol (every person processes alcohol differently)

Regardless of the type of alcoholic beverage consumed, the critical factor is the amount of alcohol consumed in a certain time period. Each of the following drinks contain about the same amount of alcohol (about ½ oz.):

- 12 ounce Beer
- 4 ounce Glass of Wine
- 1 ounce Serving of 80-Proof Liquor

Any one of these drinks can increase the average person's BAC by 0.02%. If you consume more than one drink per hour, your BAC starts to rise, and only the passage of time will rid you of the effects of alcohol.

ALCOHOL TESTS

According to the Massachusetts Implied Consent Law, every licensed operator in the state agrees to consent to a breathalyzer or blood test under certain circumstances. If you are stopped by a police officer who believes you are operating a motor vehicle or motorcycle under the influence of alcohol or drugs, the officer has the right to ask you to:

- Perform a field sobriety test
- Submit to a breathalyzer or blood test to calculate your BAC (If Placed Under Arrest)

If you take a breathalyzer test and register a 0.08% BAC or higher, you are operating above the legal limit in Massachusetts. For operators under 21 years of age, Massachusetts has a "zero tolerance" law. This means a BAC of 0.02% is above the legal limit if you are under 21 years of age. Police officers are required to immediately seize your operator's license if you register an illegal BAC or if you refuse a breathalyzer or blood test. The officer will issue you a notice of suspension or revocation, which will become effective immediately. Upon receiving this notice, you may exercise your right to a license suspension or revocation hearing.

Massachusetts enforces very strict penalties for OUI offenses. In October 2005, Massachusetts passed Melanie's Law (Chapter 122 of the Acts of 2005). This new law substantially increases the penalties and administrative sanctions for OUI offenses. Please contact the RMV at 617-351-4500 or visit the website www.mass.gov/rmv for further information regarding these OUI license suspensions and revocations.

ILLEGAL DRUGS, MEDICINE, AND OTHER CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES

Massachusetts laws that define violations and penalties for operating under the influence of alcohol also apply to drugs. Almost any drug can affect your ability to safely operate a motor vehicle. Illegal drugs, prescription medications, and over-the-counter (OTC) remedies all decrease the operator's reaction time, vision, and motor skills. If you are convicted of any drug offense, whether in Massachusetts or in another state, your operator's license will be suspended. Even if no motor vehicle was involved in the offense, Massachusetts law requires operators to lose operating privileges for a period of one (1) to five (5) years, depending on the conviction.

Penalties for Operating a Motor Vehicle Under the Influence Alcohol or Drugs

Conviction	Fine	Prison Term	License Suspension
First Offense	$500–$5,000	Maximum 2 1/2 years	1 year
For your first offense, the court may allow you to complete an alcohol education course to reduce your license suspension period.			Over Age 21, 45–90 days Under Age 21, 210 days
Second Offense	$600–$10,000	Minimum 30 days Maximum 2 1/2 years	2 years
Third Offense (Felony)	$1,000-$15,000	Minimum 150 days Maximum 5 years	8 years
Fourth Offense (Felony)	$1,500–$25,000	Minimum 1 year Maximum 5 years	10 years
Fifth Offense (Felony)	$2,000-$50,000	Minimum 2 years Maximum 5 years	Lifetime

Mandatory LICENSE Suspensions

(18 YEARS OF AGE AND OLDER)

Situation	Explanation	Suspension Period	Fee to Reinstate
Three Speeding Violations	Three speeding violations/ responsible findings within any 1-year period.	30 days	$100
Five Surchargeable Events	Any combination of moving violations and surchargeable accidents that total five surchargeable events within a 3-year period.	Must complete driver retraining program within 90 days or license will be suspended indefinitely until course is completed	$100
Seven Surchargeable Events	Any combination of moving violations and surchargeable accidents that total seven surchargeable events within a 3-year period.	60 days	$100
Habitual Traffic Offender	A total of three major moving violations or any combination of twelve major or minor moving violations within a 5-year period.	4 years	$500
Out-of-State Suspension	License has been suspended or revoked in another state.	Until the out-of-state suspension is resolved	$100

Mandatory PERMIT Suspensions

Junior Operators Only (16½ to 18 Years)

Violation	Suspension Period	Reinstatement Requirements	Fee to Reinstate
Conviction for Driving Without a Licensed Driver (c. 90, §8B)	60 days—first offense 180 days—second offense One year—subsequent offenses	All offenses require you to retake the knowledge exam. Second offense requires a Driver Attitudinal Retraining course.	$100
Conviction for Driving During the Night Restriction (c. 90, §10) (c. 90, §8B)	60 days—first offense 180 days—second offense One year—subsequent offenses	All offenses require you to retake the knowledge exam. Second offense requires a Driver Attitudinal Retraining course.	$100
Conviction for Speeding (c. 90, §17) (c. 90, §17A) (c. 90, §18)	90 days—first offense One year—second or subsequent offense	All offenses require a new knowledge test.	$100
Conviction for Drag Racing (c. 90, §17B)	One year—first offense Three years—second or subsequent offense	All offenses require a Driver Attitudinal Retraining course, and a new knowledge test. In addition, you may be required to take a State Courts Against Road Rage (SCARR) course.*	$500-first offense $1000-second or subsequent offense

Note: In addition to any other penalty required by law, Massachusetts General Laws chapter 90, section 24p requires that any Junior Operator who is convicted of Operating Under the Influence (OUI), Operating to Endanger, Leaving the Scene of an Accident, Drinking from an Open Alcohol Container, OUI with Serious Bodily Injury, Unauthorized Use of a Motor Vehicle, Reckless/Negligent Operation, Loaning/Allowing Another to Use Your License or Learner's Permit, or Motor Vehicle Homicide will face a 180 day suspension (in addition to any other suspension required by law) for a first offense, or a one year suspension for any subsequent offense. This additional suspension only applies to Junior Operators, and only in cases in which they did not already receive an additional suspension for failing or refusing a breath test.

In addition to the penalties listed, your parent or guardian will be notified of the suspension.

All fees are subject to change at any time.

Mandatory LICENSE Suspensions

Junior Operators Only (16½ to 18 Years)

Violation	Suspension Period	Reinstatement Requirements	Fee to Reinstate
Conviction for Violating Passenger or Night Restriction (c. 90, §8) (c. 90, §10)	60 days—first offense 180 days—second offense One year—subsequent offenses	Second and subsequent offenses require a Driver Attitudinal Retraining course. Third and subsequent offenses require a new knowledge and road exam.	$100
Conviction for Speeding (c. 90, §17) (c. 90, §17A) (c. 90, §18)	90 days—first offense One year—second or subsequent offense	All offenses require a Driver Attitudinal Retraining course, a new knowledge test, and a new road test. In addition, you may be required to take a State Courts Against Road Rage (SCARR) course.*	$500
Conviction for Drag Racing (c. 90, §17B)	One year—first offense Three years—second or subsequent offense	All offenses require a Driver Attitudinal Retraining course, a new knowledge test, and a new road test. In addition, you may be required to take a State Courts Against Road Rage (SCARR) course.*	$500-first offense $1000-second or subsequent offense
Conviction for Driving Negligently or Recklessly/ Operating to Endanger (c. 90, §24)	180 days—first offense One year—second or subsequent offense (within a three year period)	Second and subsequent offenses require a new knowledge test, and a new road test.	$500

Note: In addition to any other penalty required by law, Massachusetts General Laws chapter 90, section 24p requires that any Junior Operator who is convicted of Operating Under the Influence (OUI), Operating to Endanger, Leaving the Scene of an Accident, Drinking from an Open Alcohol Container, OUI with Serious Bodily Injury, Unauthorized Use of a Motor Vehicle, Reckless/Negligent Operation, Loaning/ Allowing Another to Use Your License or Learner's Permit, or Motor Vehicle Homicide will face a 180 day suspension (in addition to any other suspension required by law) for a first offense, or a one year suspension for any subsequent offense. This additional suspension only applies to Junior Operators, and only in cases in which they did not already receive an additional suspension for failing or refusing a breath test.

*A Junior Operator will only be required to take the SCARR course one time.

RMV

Registry of Motor Vehicles
P.O. Box 55889
Boston, MA 02205-5889

Deval L. Patrick, Governor

Timothy P. Murray, Lieutenant Governor

James A. Aloisi Jr., Secretary of Transportation

Rachel Kaprielian, Registrar

For comprehensive RMV information,
visit our website at www.mass.gov/rmv

We provide personalized responses
to your RMV questions via E-mail.

Contact the RMV Phone Center for

- Registry information
- Moving violation citation payments
- Registration renewals

To reach the Phone Center, call
617-351-4500
(from the 339/617/781/857 area codes)
or
800-858-3926
(from all other MA area codes)

The Phone Center is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Visa, MasterCard, and Discover
are accepted.

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MOTORCYCLES ARE EVERYWHERE!!!!!

www.mass.gov/rmv

For information about a Massachusetts Motorcycle Rider Course near you, please call 617-351-9585